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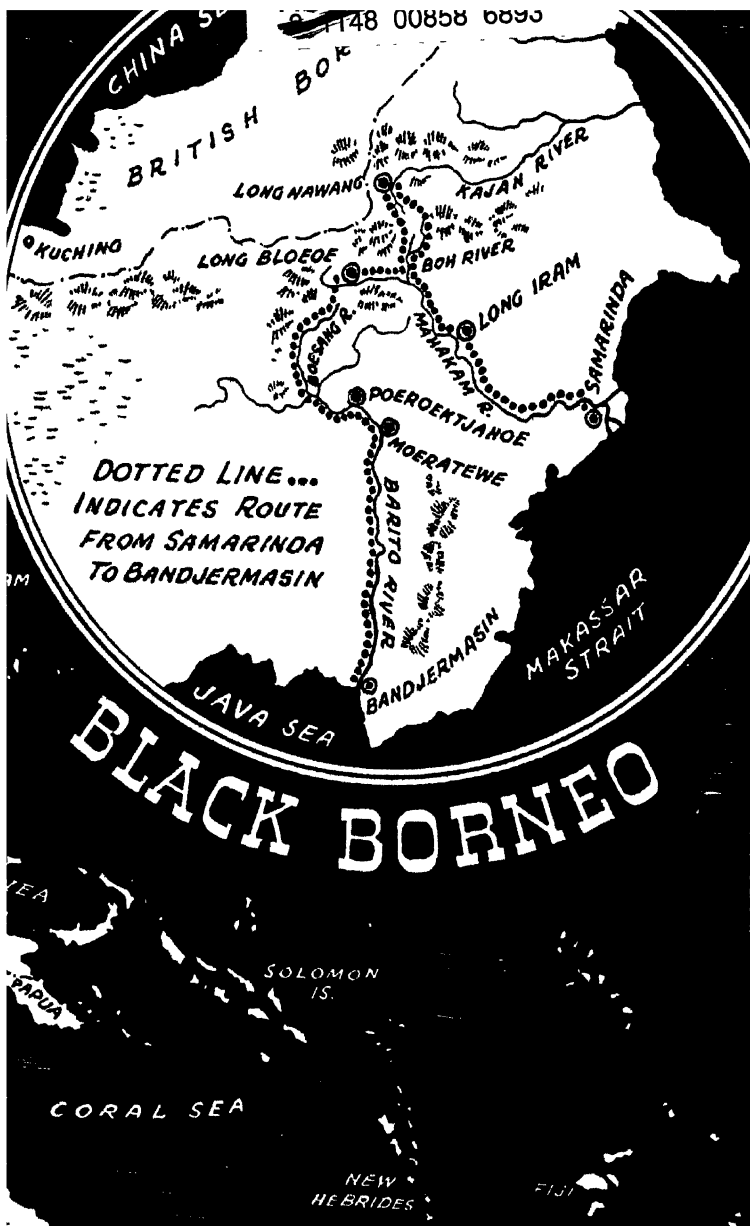


























CHARLES C. MILLER

# **BLACK BORNEO**

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TO  
THE FLYING DUTCHMEN OF  
INSULINDE

*"A ship a day keeps the Japs away"*

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# **BLACK BORNEO**







## CHAPTER 1: BLACK BORNEO

THE ONLY difference between an explorer and a bum is an excuse. The bum quite frankly bums around; the explorer tries to justify it. Time was when all he had to do was go out and sit around some bar in Singapore and come back with some new tall ones. That wasn't bad. But now he has to show results. He has to drag in bones, hides, artifacts, ore samples, in fact turn himself into a geographical junk man. Worse, he is supposed to take scientific notes, draw maps, jot down stellar observations and otherwise conduct himself according to some approved bookkeeping system. And that, no matter how you look at it, is work.

I nearly had to give it up. The bones I found in China were too heavy to budge. I cracked up trying to fly a load of stinking lion hides out of Africa, though they smelled strong enough to take off under their own power. In Australia the choicest relics I found were a thousand miles from a water hole. It became so bad I spent ten years behind a camera in Hollywood trying to figure an easy way out. Then quite by accident I learned you did not have to lug in a lot of junk if you just brought back the pictures. One ounce of film would replace a ton of bones. You still



had to carry the camera, but at least you could always hire a boy for the tougher stretches. So I packed the cameras and started out.

At that stage I was an expedition in search of a backer. Then came one of the rarest discoveries in the history of modern exploration: I found a backer in search of an expedition, walking the streets alive and unprotected, just as if there weren't a thousand sharpshooting explorers dying to bring her back alive. She was Miss Leona Jay, who, according to her ad in a New York paper, was "tired of her social ho-hum existence." She was willing, she stated, "to finance expedition anywhere."

Finance! Anywhere! I had the answer to both. Dutch Borneo and Dutch New Guinea.

I wired, briefly mentioning something about filming head-hunters, but it was enough. We went to Borneo, stopping in Java on the way just long enough to get married.

In a way that complicated matters. An explorer is supposed to spend his backer's money. If he doesn't, he is apt to lose standing. But when the backer becomes your wife it is obvious that some modifications are in order, and abruptly. Painful though it was, I changed my rosy clouds to black and white, and put the expedition on a self-supporting basis.

The new Mrs. Miller helped by promptly coming down with malaria on the crossing from Semarang, Java, to Bandjermasin, Borneo. Not just a touch, but the real thing. Three months under close medical attention, the army doctor at Bandjermasin ordered, and that was the equivalent of a prison sentence from which there was no appeal.



Three months on quinine, until her ears were filled with whistling dynamos and quarreling canary birds; three months within range of an easy chair or a soft bed; no trekking through swamps or jungle while the fever stood ready to burst into flame the instant the doctor turned his back. And three months were all we had before the season changed. Rain and more rain, until the rivers became cataraacts, the trails a quagmire. And the mosquitoes—!

In the end the doctor solved the problem by ordering me to get the hell out of town and leave his patient alone.

"Run up and take your pictures," he urged rather bluntly.

"At least run," wheezed my bride.

What I was supposed to do was make a trek into the heart of Borneo, up the Mahakam River, through Apo-Kajan territory and down the Boesang River to the coast again. Fabulous country, home of a great civilization dead for hundreds of years. In it were head-hunters, weird animals, weirder birds and things about which the natives only hinted. A land of *adat*, of superstition and decay. An uncharted wilderness in which man and nature recognized neither logic nor reasonableness. It was the Apo-Kajan.

Well, I could go up and look it over.



## CHAPTER 2: MUD—MORE MUD

OMENS and *adats* control everything in Dutch Borneo but the tides and the steamship captains. Sometimes it is hard to tell about the tides. The southeastern coast between Bandjermasin and Samarinda is so low and swampy that the high-water and low-mud lines are lost in the elastic ooze, but as far as our skipper was concerned, he didn't care. He would put his boat to the dock if he had to float it in on the humidity, a not entirely improbable feat.

Since Captain Jan van Dyk was impervious to omens, we made the coastwise trip from Bandjermasin to Samarinda on schedule, and that is the only time I ever arrived anywhere in Borneo on time. Having reached the mud-hole, I could find no reason why promptness in this case carried any special virtue. There was nothing there, and very few people doing nothing about it. The few soldiers the steamer carried to serve as replacements at the port were in no hurry to go ashore. They would see enough of it later on. The soldiers being relieved to return to Java were in no hurry to come aboard. It was hotter on deck than in the garrison, and until the ship was ready to put out to sea they preferred to stay where they were. No hurry about



the mail either. It was two months old already. Another couple of hours or days would not interfere with its staleness one way or another.

I began rounding up my five-man crew hired in Java to serve as the nucleus of my expedition. My camera assistant, Wang Lo, half crook, half-breed Malay-Chinese, I found playing *tjempelik* with the Chinese members of the deck crew. If there is any way to cheat at *tjempelik* Wang Lo was doing it. He was surrounded by the earthly possessions of all the players, and seemed greatly relieved that I called him away when I did. A certain amount of suspicion in the air was proving hostile to his peace of mind.

The second member was Achmed, my Malayan boy, a veteran campaigner with the Dutch Colonial Army. I found him campaigning away in a deck hammock, automatically fanning away the flies from his face with a clocklike rhythm that in no way impaired his sleep. He could do things like that. Nothing bothered him. Boilers blowing up, cannibals heaving rock hammers, my dinners burning up—it was all the same to Achmed. Easy come, easy go—so what and allee same go to hell. I gave him a nudge and he slithered off without waking up. The other three Malayan boys were Admo, Wirio and Kitjil, who, aside from their separate names, might have been stand-ins or doubles or triplets for each other. They could fight like fiends, they were indefatigable on the march, they worked like dogs, and when standing watch they never slept. But when it came to personality they were three coffee beans. Stout fellows, though. Just poor company. Even as I turned to look for them I



saw them trailing after Achmed, turning up their toes as their bare feet scorched on the hot deck.

That was my crew. Of course for travel in the interior I would have paddlers and carriers recruited from the Dyak villages, but the local boys would undergo a hundred per cent change in personnel every few miles. The Dyaks have a quaint habit of picking off strangers found wandering around in the jungle, and no native was going to get far enough from home to qualify as a stranger. Social intercourse was limited to the village upstream and the village downstream. Thus residents of Village 1 might be friendly with those in Village 2, and Village 2 could be on familiar terms with Village 3, but in spite of mutual friends in Village 2, warriors of 1 and 3 would always have a pot boiling for each other. It would be the job of my five aides to break in each successive crew—and stay out of pots.

By some freak chance, the river packet that was to take me upstream was waiting for the K.P.M. steamer when we pulled in. Tied right up to the dock. Not only that, but it was in working order, ready to leave the instant, or within three or four hours of the instant, that the transfer of cargo destined for the up-river posts was completed. It was a stroke of luck that had me mystified until I learned the packet had missed the previous steamer by so much the skipper decided to wait for us and make up time by hauling two cargoes at once. It might strain his boat a little, but hell, the thing had to sink some time. To this thoroughly sound logic I was forced to agree, and since the skipper had a miniature ice plant on board for the sole purpose of refreshing his gin splits, I was soon far from uncomfortable.



That our abrupt departure denied me the pleasure of sight-seeing in Samarinda only added to my peace of mind. I could smell it.

The Mahakam River was at low tide. Three miles wide at high water, it was now a criss-cross of narrow channels and vast mud flats. Each mud flat steamed and reeked under the fierce sun, and each seemed to have a special flavor. Yet over and above the effluvium of the mud rode the mysterious scent of the Orient, the mystery consisting in so little smelling so bad. No, I had no yen to go sight-seeing in Samarinda.

I sat at the rail of the packet and looked on the far side where the steamer was lazily settling in the low water, looking as though it had just had a sunstroke and was glad of it. Such cargo as had to be unloaded was just hoisted to the deck and allowed to slide over the side. There a crew of Dyaks in a shallow-draft canoe tied right up to the ship and let the stuff pour in until the canoe was full. I saw a case containing a thousand dollar camera and about five hundred dollars' worth of lenses come out of the hold, bang against the sluice rail and finally topple over the side just beyond the edge of the receiving canoe. A dozen men leaned over the gunwale, the canoe teetered in suicidal frenzy, one Dyak fell overboard, but the camera was safe. I took my gin split around to the other side of the deck. If I had to witness anything more nerve-racking than that, I would be a wreck before I started.

From this side of the deck I had a look at the town. It was beautiful and poisonous. A metropolitan Mickey Finn. You could see all the glorious colors of the tropical flowers,



you could feel the low, heavy viscosity of its civic atmosphere, and you could smell the smothering influence of the jungle on sanitation. You could not hear much. Sound denotes a certain amount of activity, and of action the only sign was around the boats and that was far from high speed. Only the backs of the red shingled houses were presented to the river, and they had such a pronounced overhang one could only wonder uneasily as to the exact purpose of this architectural flourish.

In due course of time the tide returned, getting stuck in the mud occasionally on the way in. The steamer struggled back to an even keel, the mud scows made a few more hurried trips, the packet blew its whistle, and everything was ready for our departure. Sure enough, pretty soon the skipper tossed off the last of his drink and wandered into the wheelhouse sucking on a cube of ice. That was the signal for the works to start. After a while a turmoil of chocolate colored foam boiled out from under the stern. By staring solely at the wake, one could build up a pretty fair illusion of speed, and it was only upon studying the shore that I discovered we were still stuck in the mud. This, however, was standard procedure. Pretty soon the churning screw had washed enough mud astern to scoop out a basin big enough to float the packet, and once this was accomplished it was a simple matter, requiring little more than a couple of hours, to buck our way into deep water.

For the accommodation of Dyak traders who wished to return to their upstream villages, the packet had a couple of tow ropes over the stern rail, and at the end of each bobbed a canoe full of unsmiling natives. Some of them



had waited three weeks for the ride. They would not have missed it for the world—half the fun of trading at Samarinda was the free ride back—but to reveal any evidence of pleasure was against their nature. They just sat there like so many bumps on a log and let the packet do the work. There was a certain amount of mind-over-matter logic in their passive acceptance of the ride. As explained to me by Taman Bok, one of the canoe leaders, it was their legs and arms which enjoyed the ride since they did not have to work, and arms and legs never betrayed pleasure in anything.

On board with me were a captain and lieutenant of the Dutch Colonial Army returning to their post at Long Iram with a band of new recruits. The officers were white, the recruits Javanese. Both officers were veterans of the Borneo interior, Captain Mulder in particular having spent several years on the upper Mahakam. Authorities on the country were what they should have been, and authorities they were, but not on the country. They could tell me to within a day how long it took to train a Javanese to shoulder arms, and they could tell me to within a vitamin or two how much it took to feed fifty men on the march, but they didn't care what country they went through while marching on vitamins. That I, the son of an army man, should ask questions like that hurt their feelings. I should know they were soldiers, not psychologists or crack-pot explorers. Soldiers in the full and only sense of the word. If they were assigned to stamp out head-hunting, they stamped out head-hunters. What matter if they were Kenja Dyaks, Poenan Dyaks or Bahau Dyaks? They hunted



heads, didn't they? They had to be stamped out, didn't they? Then what difference did it make what else they were? About the country—was it rough, wet, full of underbrush or what was it like? There again I was wrong in asking questions not becoming an officer to answer. If the order was to go to a certain village, they went there. If the country was rough or wet, or full of underbrush, why that made the trip a little harder, but hardship meant nothing to a soldier. If it was hard going, and they so reported, it would look as if they were complaining. If it was easy going, and they so reported it, it was very likely they would never be given so soft a snap again. So why report that?

This attitude is typical of the tropical military man. My own father, who devoted his life to building the Dutch East Indies, was as guilty of it as any. Sent on a mapping expedition in Dutch New Guinea one time, he was gone six months, returning at last with bales of maps. While they knew exactly what ground was covered, they had no idea in the world of what people lived there since my father's detail had scared all the savages out of the territory. Such an attitude has its merits, but it has its limitations too. Just what they were I was to find out all too soon. Especially in regard to head-hunting. Of course, as Captain Mulder had said, he stamped out head-hunting wherever he found it, but since he could find it only where he happened to be, and since he couldn't be everywhere in a country five times the size of England, there was apt to be quite a bit of the practice flourishing around the very substantial edges.



Seeing that I wasn't going to get any information that might help me on my trip, I decided the only thing I could do was see that they did not get anything out of me that would help them on theirs. They were demons at whist. I was a novice and due for a trimming. It was not long in coming. In the shade of the wheelhouse they took all my available change and were starting in on my camping equipment. That was when I went into a huddle with Wang Lo. He had some dice made of solid ivory, he said. I tried them out with highly satisfactory results, so much so that I finally came to the conclusion that if those dice were solid ivory, they were made from the crookedest elephant ever shot in Burma. I never dared use them for profit. A few passes in the evening to recoup my losses in whist during the afternoon was about all I cared to strain my luck, or my competitor's gullibility. However, it was enough that I maintained my status quo.

On the schedule, it was three days between Samarinda and Long Iram, which meant that at some time or other a skipper, probably running ahead of a couple of squadrons of head-hunters, had made it in three days. As far as we were concerned, along about the end of the fourth day we were still knocking around about forty miles above Samarinda while a couple of Chinese traders on board manipulated their abacus accounting systems until they registered a profit. There were no cargoes to be taken aboard; they would be picked up on the return trip. But in the meantime the Chinese wanted to be sure they would not be cheated, in case there was a cargo waiting for them. Their Oriental concentration on profit reminded me that



I wasn't making any. Sitting around on deck losing money on whist and picking it up again on craps was all very well for an explorer bank-rolled by an armchair adventurer or a scientific foundation, but it wasn't the right attitude for a man married to his backer. My conscience woke up and dusted itself off. Pretty soon I was downright uncomfortable, even with a gin split in my hand. The upshot of it was, I decided to begin my exploring before I got there.

The river, for instance, flowed between banks that had trees on them. No one had ever noticed the trees. The trees had birds and monkeys in them. No one had paid much attention to that before. The monkeys had fleas on them, but only the monkeys had ever noticed that. I got out my telephoto lens and went to work.

Life on the river became something to be seen and not endured. A tropical river, winding and twisting from a bed of gold and diamonds somewhere up in the unknown and mysterious interior down to a vast mud flat at Samarinda. I ought to be able to do something with that. Documentary stuff. From mud to riches and back again. With this as my theme I started wasting film in earnest.

I am not the one to worry much about themes. My idea for years has been to get the picture, and if it doesn't have a theme of its own, strong enough to stand on its own two legs, throw the darn thing away. However, in this case I felt Borneo needed some extra help in the way of explanatory notes. Of all the islands in the Dutch East Indies, poor old Borneo is the most misunderstood. Most of what people have heard about the island can be attributed to circuses, side shows and freak exhibits, where the wild man



of Borneo, the Missing Link and other profitable forms of showmanship can be exploited without danger of a libel suit.

The truth of the matter is that Borneo is not a new country emerging from the age of dinosaurs, but an old civilization returning to the Stone Age. Everyone knows of the crumbling temples of Burma, of the ancient temples of the Incas and the Mayas, of the Pyramids of Egypt, but few have ever heard of the Borneo temples that were already falling apart when the others were being built. Yet I have seen them. Proud are many museums of their samples of Borneo art. Borneo's art died thousands of years ago. What exists today is but a copy of an awesome artistry the creative genius of which has been dead these many centuries. My observations lead me to believe that at copying patterns handed down from generation to generation Dyaks are extremely clever, but at originating anything they are utterly lacking in creative ability. They are in deadly fear of novelty, and in this fear lies the key to the riddle of Borneo. Traveling along the smooth reaches of the lower Mahakam River, I could feel it. Farther up it became an oppressive weight, and in the Apo-Kajan it was almost thick enough to be seen. But right now I was doing my work from a deck chair.

In all the history of exploration—and a grim, bloody history it is, explorers say—nothing has been found to rival a good, canvas-backed deck chair on a river packet as a vantage point from which to make discoveries. A dog team might have its points. I don't want to know. A camel caravan, they tell me, is mighty romantic, but you never can



tell when one of the beasts will turn and snap off your arm. Auto caravans are rough, especially when all have to get out and push, which is most of the time. It's a cinch you can't enjoy a good scotch and soda galloping through country on horseback, and if you're flying over strange territory, you have to stay sober. Now take the deck chair. You sit there, preferably in the shade, with a palm fan in one hand, something cooling in the other. Pretty soon you round a point, and there is something new to look at. You take a good look, maybe shoot a few feet of film, and settle back for another couple of hours till the next bend is rounded. Suppose you see something out of the ordinary. If you are in your own canoe you are duty bound to investigate, even though it means crawling through the mud, getting stuck in the dense river brush, tangling with snakes and otherwise reducing yourself to a miserable state. But on a packet you settle down comfortably and go right on by. Your conscience doesn't bother you. You know you can't stop the boat even if you want to. Which you don't.

I took to it without a struggle. In no time at all I was a professional river watcher. Brown water pouring between green banks, exactly as it had been doing for centuries. Sometimes we were so close to shore the branches scraped the pilothouse. Other times we churned up the center in a river so wide our progress was about as stately as a grapefruit rind floating out to sea. Where nipa palms lined the banks, there the water was deep; where mangroves waded out on stiltlike roots the water was shallow. Those were the only channel markers the pilot had, and when they were lacking he had to steer by the crocodiles. These lazy crea-



tures floated mostly in the slack water. By heading the boat where they weren't he managed to keep pretty well clear of sand bars and mud banks.

Crocs weren't always dependable, though. The one detour we made into the jungle was caused by a mess of crocodiles floating down the center of the river. The skipper started easing over toward shore where rough water indicated a deep channel almost under the trees. But when he got there, he saw another batch of crocs dead ahead. To complicate matters, some were swimming underwater, creating an effect for all the world like shallow ripples. Instantly he banged the bell for full speed astern and swung her hard over. But the engine room hit her with full speed ahead, so we went on into the jungle. A monkey shaken out of its perch landed screaming on the deck, bounced twice and vanished over the stern rail still swearing. From below we heard a frightful racket, then a splash. The monkey had landed in one of the Dyak canoes we were towing behind. Now monkeys are good omens under certain circumstances, but when they start chewing everybody in sight, they are decidedly bad. So the Dyaks abandoned ship.

In the meantime the crocs started drifting in to see what the excitement was all about. For a few minutes the water was full of Dyaks, crocodiles, and one monkey that was everywhere at once. Captain Mulder and I stood by with rifles, banging away to make a noise but not daring to shoot into the fracas for fear of knocking off a couple of Dyaks. They weren't loafing. Our stern was six feet above water, with a decided overhang, but one boy cleared it without seeming to touch the rail. The rest headed for shore and



didn't stop until they were well up into the trees. The remaining canoes didn't waste any time getting out of there either. By the time I remembered my camera, all I had within range were a few crocs gaping in bewildered disappointment. I think they got the monkey.

After the skipper had calmed his nerves with a noggin of gin he decided it was time to see what damage had been done, if any. He wasn't in any hurry. He had grounded in that muck before, and knew he had about as much chance as a fly on flypaper of getting right out. The bow, conveniently enough, was wedged between a coconut palm and a beautiful ironwood that must have been a hundred feet high. Thus we could sit and eat coconuts while wondering how we were going to get off the ironwood.

That ironwood stuff is not misnamed. Our packet was seventy feet over all, had a beam of twenty feet and two decks. When we rammed shore we were hitting about three miles an hour, but the ponderous momentum piled up behind that bulk was tremendous. Even so, when we hit the tree we didn't even scrape the bark off. The best we could do was leave a ring of our own deck paint on it. The tree, in return, was not quite so gentle. When it was through, our freight gangplank was accordion pleated, our steel rail coiled up like a string of abandoned picture wire, and our forward deck looked like a powder house after some dreadful mistake.

Fortunately, the overhang common to all river packets protected the hull from violence, though this fact had to be ascertained from the inside. In the thick mud outside, it would have taken two Chinese magicians and a divining



rod to tell that there was a hull there at all, let alone what condition it was in.

We lay down on the edge and scrutinized the mud. Then we went aft and scrutinized the water. After that we had another drink. The situation was serious. This was no time to lose our heads, waste our energy in frantic rushing about the deck. We had to remain calm and cool, prove ourselves iron men of immeasurable resourcefulness, worthy of the title of soldier, sailor, explorer. So we had another drink.

Captain Mulder finally decided that it was his duty as an officer to issue some orders. He sent his men over the side with shovels and orders to dig the boat out. It was a tactical error, a mistake in strategy. The first man to sink a shovel into the muck found it so adhesive he was lucky to get the shovel back. By that time more men wallowing around had broken through the thin layer of jungle mould, and we were lucky to get the men back. That, evidently, was not the way to get the boat out.

In the end it was a combination of Dutch obstinacy, Yankee ingenuity and Dyak omens that did the trick. To lighten the forward end we moved all cargo to the stern where there was plenty of water under the keel. Our next step involved rigging block and tackle to the winch in the bow in such a way that by means of a block suspended about fifty feet up in the ironwood and the running end of the cable brought back and made fast to a stanchion, we could start the winch and practically lift ourselves by our own bootstraps. At first it looked as if we were doomed to failure. We had plenty of purchase, and plenty of power, but it was obvious that application of both would result in



hanging the deck up in the tree without seriously altering the position of the hull.

Then I had the brilliant idea of starting up a bilge pump and jetting the mud away from the bow with a fire hose. At the same time the winch man could try to jiggle the bow up and down. The bad feature of this was that after we had washed the mud away there was no place for it to go but back. Still, the more water we poured in the less adhesive became the mud. We squirted in enough to float a dozen packets. We were still stuck. Just when it began to look as if we were going to have to make a new river or get another boat, a brilliant *taladjang* bird, most powerful of omens, flew overhead, circled leisurely to the left (a point of vital importance) and then, miracle of miracles, flew across the river. Nothing could resist magic like that. That flight across the river alone clinched it. It was the pocus without which no hocus is complete. Every mud-spattered Dyak on the boat rushed to the stern the better to witness the miracle. In the meantime the winch man gave his winch an extra nudge. The extra power, the added weight in the stern, and the *taladjang* bird were enough. The mud, by some strange chemistry, changed from glue to grease. We shot into the river as though we had been dry-docked on a ski jump.

There was a hole in the deck where the winch had been, and a few strands of snapped cable around the stanchion, but otherwise we were ready to go. Not the skipper. He wanted his winch back. He would have got it, too, picked it out of a tree like a banana, except that the broken cable that should have been snarled into a thousand knots perversely



untangled itself and whipped through the block in the tree like a snake heading for home. The winch plopped back into the mud we had just vacated. Even a Dutch skipper knows when he is licked. The winch is still there.

All told, that little jaunt into the jungle cost us two days. One day to shift cargo, and another to rig the block and tackle in the tree, and it wasn't until late the second day that a weary crew, more mud than men, finally skidded through three inches of muck, covering the deck, and sat down to a supper of boiled rice and more mud. The galley, the pilothouse, the hold, the engine room, all mud. Even the ice cubes in our gin were chocolate colored.

What made this mudside interlude all the worse was that I was just a paying passenger, supposed to sit at my ease, drink a few coolers and pot crocs with an army rifle for a few side bets with Captain Mulder. None of this pitting man against the jungle stuff until I got to Long Iram. That's where my own expedition was supposed to start. And that's where it did too.

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## CHAPTER 3: HELL-CATS

LONG IRAM is not a savage town. Just a little backward. Of course, on a real dark night at the far end of a rice famine some stew pot might boil a little more merrily than the prevalence of wild game would account for, but otherwise the village is just a quaint river town. The natives gather rattan and damar, gutta-percha and caoutchouc for the trading post, and receive pants, bright sarongs, trinkets and mirrors in return. Some of the men build dugouts for the river traffic, some cruise the jungle for valuable woods close enough to water to be rafted to a sawmill, some are farmers specializing in agricultural delicacies to supplement the universal rice diet. A few Chinese are the business entrepreneurs, grubstaking the farmers between crops, financing logging operations, bartering trade goods for rubber. And doing right well at it.

The Dutch Colonial Army has a post there, maintained in the interest of law and order and the suppression of head-hunting. Most of the soldiers are Javanese, with a sprinkling of Ambonese and Madoerese. The army officers and controleur constitute the white population, and upon them falls the delicate job of settling all disputes that crop



up within this polyglot mixture. Most of the disputes concern women, since love is not only free but downright philanthropic. In spite of the presence of the military post, Long Iram represents the average river town in Borneo. And in spite of all popular conceptions of life in the grim interior of Borneo, sharp-fanged fathers love their little brats, and paddle their fannies and send them off to school. The little brats don't like it, and they howl, but to school they go just the same.

Life in the garrison and life in the village are two separate things. For one thing, the river separates the two, and in that country one doesn't go paddling across a river just for a little chit-chat when one can find company a few feet away. For another, each feels superior to the other. So the soldiers stick to themselves, and the villagers try to keep their women home.

Garrison life is a monotone in monotony. The day starts at dawn with a flag-raising ceremony, and ends at sunset with a flag-lowering ceremony. The in-between hours offer the same stimulating variety of drill, more drill and practice at drilling. The barracks are laid out in a row facing the river, just far enough back from the water to allow space for a road and a small plot of grass before each building. Each officer has a bungalow flanking the barracks, the two junior officers at one end, the Captain at the other, while the Controleur, head of the civil government, has a separate cottage set in solitary splendor several yards removed from the Captain's. He fancies his authority greater than that of the Captain; the Captain regards the Controleur as a leech on the bloodstream of progress. In the



absence of other white men to talk to, they associate with each other, finding great comfort and peace of mind in their mutual tolerance.

Attached to the back of each bungalow is a small shingled hut for the houseboys who wait at table, sweep up, handle the laundry and place bets on their stables of cockroaches. And back of the barracks, partly concealed by the edge of the jungle, are the huts of the soldiers' women. There lies the spice of life, and of death, as far as the soldiers are concerned.

The presence of women in a tropical army camp is a problem as old as warfare. More men have been killed because of them than were ever knocked off by cannibals. Not that the women aren't cannibals themselves sometimes. But there is no getting away from them. They're there waiting when the first detachment pulls in, and if they aren't, they come in on the first ride they can hitch. Such being the case, the Dutch army figures that if they can't be eliminated, they should be controlled as much as possible, by being registered by number, and by having each soldier held as responsible for the serial number of his woman as for the serial number of his rifle. The system works out fairly well, but practical experience has demonstrated that the right rifle will turn up on the right shoulder far more consistently than the right woman.

Because of our many delays coming upstream, and the complete absence of the previous scheduled packet trip, I had a chance to see the system in operation at better than normal speed. There were times when it was spouting bolts and rivets and shearing pins at a great rate, and finally it



blew up in our faces. It came about in so explosive a manner because the packet skipper suddenly decided that instead of laying over for a couple of days as was his custom, he would up anchor and return to Samarinda the same day. That meant that Captain Mulder had no time to talk over affairs at the post with his predecessor. That worthy gentleman was so relieved at getting out of there that he boarded the packet before the anchor hit bottom and refused to come off for a second lest it get away.

Captain Mulder shrugged and turned to me. "Come on. You stay with me in the bungalow until you get a crew organized." His hospitality was a little one-sided. I think he had some idea of what was ahead of him and wanted help. Which is a highly charitable explanation of his conduct. He knew damn well what was ahead of him and wanted a fall guy in the worst way. In his eagerness he even put up Wang Lo and the four Malays in the barracks.

We came in cold, as it were, but before the day was over we were both hot. Boiling over. From a military standpoint the garrison was in perfect order. The men were neat and clean to the point of painfulness. Their weapons and buttons were gleaming. Not a spot of rust to be seen anywhere, and in discipline they jumped to attention with audible snaps. But the domestic situation was dynamite stored on the brink of an awakening volcano.

It developed that the retiring Captain was a mathematician, a romanticist and a prude. He believed in keeping serial numbers in numerical order and treating tropical love not as a social disturbance but as a mathematical equation—one man and one woman equaled one pair. It offended his



romantic nature that the female serial numbers might like to shift about, it horrified his mathematical nature to consider the havoc such shifts would work in his neat book-keeping and it shocked the prude in him to think of love operating on so casual a basis. No, sir, if a soldier was assigned cute little No. A-43, then that soldier had better be able to produce No. A-43 on demand. If she proved to be a hair-pulling hell-cat of the first water after the first glow of passion had scorched the soldier beyond the point of normal endurance, she was still just the other half of an equation to the Captain. Another point he had overlooked was that while it is possible to discipline a soldier, there is no disciplining a slant-eyed vixen whose ancestry undoubtedly includes Malay pirates, Sulu cannibals and Dyak head-hunters. She doesn't take to it. Not even a little bit.

The flag-lowering ceremony was over. The sun had set beyond the high hills across the river. Mosquitoes droning beyond the screened porch were contributing the only musical note to be heard. Across the river a native orchestra was in full swing, but beside them I preferred the mosquitoes. Captain Mulder and I were enjoying our first peaceful moment since our arrival. Then the houseboy slithered in.

"Tuan, there is a soldier without, who would speak with you."

The Captain set down his drink and looked at me. Not knowing any better, I looked back. "This," he said, "is where it starts."

"What?" I asked blankly.

"Oh, nothing much," he replied. "Sounds like girl trouble. Stick around."



At first glance the soldier who staggered into the yellow rays of our kerosene lamp looked more like the victim of leopard trouble. Or two leopards. His face was cut to ribbons. A six-inch gash across his skull had permanently impaired the value of his head as a cannibal trophy. Blood covered his faded khaki tunic from top to bottom and continued to drip down his bare legs and dusty feet. He wobbled on his feet as he spoke.

"A thousand pardons, Tuan Captain," he stammered thickly. He tried to stand at attention, but nearly fell on his face. "I am Moerto. In your book I am registered to Baloe Aren. We are not happy."

There has been a lot of talk about how slow the Orientals are in coming to the point. That may be true on a nice sunny afternoon when there is no point in coming to the point anyway, but when the hinges of hell are creaking open and the first little devils already sprinting through, they don't waste a lot of words.

Captain Mulder had recovered enough from the sight of the apparition to murmur, "You don't look happy."

"For six months it has been so," Moerto offered. "Maybe I'll be here for some time yet." A look of horror crossed his already horrible face. "Years maybe . . ." He couldn't finish.

Captain Mulder had the houseboy bring out the registration book. Rows of immaculate figures faced him. He ran his fingers down the column until he came to the name he sought. "I take it you want a divorce?" he asked, looking up.

A look of hope crossed the Malayan's face. "You will



change the book?" he asked almost incredulously. It was obvious that he regarded the rows of figures as something immutable.

Without answering, Captain Mulder dipped his pen and ran a line through Baloe Aren's registration number. "The figures are changed. You can tell her she no longer is your number."

Thus simply was the divorce accomplished. But that, we were to learn, was not that. Moerto had scarcely left, a new life in his stagger, when the sergeant of the guard appeared at the door.

After a polite interval of pardon begging, the sergeant hinted that while he was not asking for himself, there were several men of his company who were interested in learning if Moerto had indeed been granted a divorce.

"Of course it is true," Captain Mulder assured him. "If anybody can show cause why a divorce should be granted, I shall be glad to fix him up."

The sergeant saluted and bowed himself out, at first slowly and then more and more rapidly until, hitting the screen door, he bowed right on through without touching the latch. It was about four feet to the ground, but when I looked out to see if he had broken his neck, I saw him still bowing. Captain Mulder's predecessor might not have done much else, but he had overdone a job on etiquette.

The houseboy repaired the damaged door with mosquito netting, though not until about a thousand of the devils had flown through the break. We smoked, sampled the Holland gin, and drowsed ourselves to the point where clean sheets were looking pretty good when we heard a faint disturb-



ance back at the edge of the jungle. The Captain jerked erect uneasily, but when the sound was not repeated he settled back.

"I thought I heard a divorce," he explained.

Another gin was going down, when the sound was heard again, augmented by a few smacks that carried across the river and came echoing back from the hills.

"By God, it is a divorce," he exclaimed with conviction. "If I was a brave man I'd investigate. Hm, well, let 'em come to me."

The sound was rising in pitch. I heard the satisfied yowl of a vengeful female and the agonized yelp of her victim. He sounded as if he was doing poorly. In this he was not alone. Other yowls were drowning his own, and then abruptly screams were drowning the yowls. Every woman who had suffered months, even years, tied to a mate she had adopted casually before learning of the commandant's aversion to erasing serial numbers, was releasing her pent up emotion. She was releasing every spiteful thought she had ever harbored. And having seen the spite a native can pile up in a single day, I know that the compression of months is something definitely more than effervescent.

According to the registration book there were seventy-five women housed in the huts back of the barracks. Judging by the din they were putting up, fury must have doubled their strength.

"By all the devils," Captain Mulder roared above the shrieks. "If I'm going to have an army left, I'd better save it now. Come on."

"Hey," I protested, "I'm not in the army."



But he couldn't hear me. He plunged through the door and perforce I followed him.

"Call out the guard," he was shouting. If he had no other qualifications as an officer, his voice would have rated him a captaincy. Though hell had broken loose, I could hear him twenty feet away.

Shadowy figures were running between the buildings. Some sought refuge beneath the raised floors, but resounding thwacks emerging from the blackness there indicated they would have done better to have kept running.

A bugle blasted a call to arms, but just when it should have hit a high note there was a burble as if the instrument had been shoved down the brave man's throat. Captain Mulder's white uniform stood out in the starlit night and I joined him. There was protection in numbers and I felt the need of some.

"Here, take this." He had a bamboo pole in his hand and he tried to give me half. It bent double and cracked but wouldn't break. "God damn," he was muttering and tugging, "God damn." I took the other end and we twisted together.

There was a surge in our direction, then a stampede. At that moment we happened to be standing in the blackest shadows of a tree. No one could have seen us even if they had been looking, which they weren't. Nor could we see anybody else. The next instant we were on our backs, bowled over but each still hanging to that pole. It mowed them down. Fugitive males and battling females landed in a heap, writhing, clawing, biting. And we were at the bottom. But the impact broke the pole.





In the seaport town of Bandjermasin, on the southern coast, canals replace roads.





Borneo Women.









Marketing in Borneo.



Captain Mulder surged to his feet. "Give 'em hell," he bellowed, and let fly with the switch. Thwack! Yelp! I struggled up, my hair rapidly thinning under the onslaught of finger nails. Thwack! I swung my own splintered rod. Whomever it hit, it stung. I swung again, feeling better. The hussy parting my hair in furrows suddenly broke for it and my switch smacked squarely upon the flying shreds of her sarong. The rest of the party dissolved like mist.

"The guard! Where the hell is the guard?" Captain Mulder was shouting.

"Here, sir," came a weak voice at our feet.

The shadow of a scarecrow lurched upright, tottered in a circle and finally came to rest at attention.

"What! You the guard?" Captain Mulder roared. "Where's the rest of you?"

It was pretty dark, but I swear I could see the guard blanch. He clapped his hands to various parts of his anatomy, fearful that at each clap he would find some vital part missing. At last in a tone of intense relief he reported, "All here, Captain."

"No, no. I mean where are the rest of the guards. Don't tell me we have only one man on sentry duty."

"Pardon, Captain. Pardon. I beg your pardon. The other guards. Yes, there are other guards." He paused. "All safe, Captain," he finished brightly. "They ran away."

"Oh, God." Mulder was tearing his hair. "Get them back on duty. Guards! Bugler, sound assembly."

So tremendous was this last command that it was picked up and repeated in full by the echoing hills across the river. "Bugler, sound assembleeee."



The bugler did, too. Even if he had been stretched out unconscious he would have risen to obey that awful blast.

One by one the tattered remnants of a once spruce outfit began to filter through the darkness. They fell into line by instinct in the tight formation of the Dutch Colonial Army. Whenever one man wobbled, a ripple ran all the way down the line.

"Sergeant, call the roll!"

By that time the two lieutenants had come rushing up with gasoline lanterns, to be met by a withering glance from Captain Mulder that stopped them cold. The light was a help to me though. As the sergeant rolled through the list of unpronounceable names, I had a chance to look the soldiers over. Here and there in the ranks were men without marks, obviously bachelors who had locked themselves in at the first scream of revolt. As for the rest, and that included Achmed and Wang Lo too, they were a sorry mess. Not a whole tunic in the lot. Nor a whole skin. Of the one hundred men lined up, at least seventy had a full day of clothes mending ahead of them. For seventy-five women, that wasn't a bad night's work. But it did reflect sadly on the degree of monogamy of female nature. Seventy-five women involved; seventy men wounded. There was a doubling up somewhere.

While the roll call was going on, there was a cackle of jeering voices back in the neighborhood of the women's huts.

Captain Mulder turned in that direction, cupped his hands, and yanked the trigger on his voice. "Shut up," he fired, and the salvo went rocking between the barracks in a cloud of dust, carrying everything before it.



It stopped the women cold. Not a peep out of them. But it started the monkeys to chattering half way to the next range of hills.

The roll call revealed all men present and accounted for. Captain Mulder toured the lines in a brief inspection. I tagged along, and to a newly married man, it was not an encouraging sight.

Selecting the worst wrecks in the crowd, the Captain ordered the sergeant to bring them to his cottage, where we held summary court. The net result of our findings was nothing. The soldiers were completely bewildered by the sudden uprising. One minute all was peaceful, women gossiping around as was their custom in the early evening hours. Next moment there was a chill in the air. The women began to get excited. Some straggled off, others rushed off, and pretty soon not a group was to be seen. While the men were still meditating gratefully on this phenomenon, a couple of slant-eyed Amazons reappeared with wooden pokers, selected their respective mates and started whaling. That was the signal for the fireworks to start, "and, Captain, you know the rest."

Seeing we were getting nowhere questioning the soldiers, Captain Mulder dismissed them with orders not to let it happen again, and instructed the sergeant to fetch in some women. That unhappy gentleman, an intelligent Javanese, started off, turned hesitantly, and then went resignedly on his way.

"What's the matter with that guy?" Captain Mulder muttered querulously. "What kind of a garrison have I stumbled into? Must be a fine fighting force if they can't even beat their own women."



"Have a drink," was the only recommendation I could think of worth mentioning. We had one. It helped a lot, and we were on the point of sending the houseboy after another when the sergeant returned. Behind him, half-scared, half-defiant, were five women.

The Captain leaned back in his chair, feet outstretched, and surveyed them coldly. It looked like a good, impersonal pose so I did likewise. The five women shuffled their bare feet on the splintery floor and kept their heads down.

They were a handsome lot. The beauties of Bali have been much touted, partly because they really are magnificent creatures, but mainly because the Balinese are gentle folk among whom it is perfectly safe for artists and tourists to wander. The she-cats of Borneo are equally beautiful, and in addition are possessed of a lithe, vibrant muscularity as compelling in its fascination as it is repelling in its suggestion of hidden forces of sheer animalism. Artists have never been able to exploit this particular quality. It is hard to keep one's mind on one's brushes or camera when the subjects appear to be keeping their minds on whether or not the artist would make a tasty dish.

The women before us were simply dressed. A sarong knotted over the hips was all there was. Necklaces, wrist bands, earrings and other impedimenta had been stripped for the battle or forcibly removed during it. In the yellow lamp light their brown skins glistened taut over their flat bellies and high, small breasts. But Captain Mulder wasn't judging a beauty contest. His gaze fastened on the smallest of the quintette. I would have started any investigation into trouble with her myself. She had that smoldering type of



the approach of the climax with considerable apprehension. If the pole collapsed all their work was gone for nothing. Into this emergency I stepped with a remarkable lack of common sense, a rare gift of mine.

I looked around for Taman Kila, but apparently he sensed what I was up to and faded. So I sent Achmed, Wirio and the rest of my boys to cut some long, stout bamboo poles from a nearby clump. It was my intention to brace the *belawang* pole much as telephone linemen brace a telephone pole they are setting. Well, it worked until the *ajau* reached the top of the pole and tied his bundle. Then the crazy galoot had to pull some childish flourishes, waving his body around like an acrobat before an appreciative audience, while he kept his legs locked around the pole. Of course the rotten thing cracked. It started to topple in my direction.

Achmed and Wirio were both on my side pushing against their poles, and when the giant trunk started to wobble we really dug in and heaved. All of a sudden it dawned on us that if the *belawang* pole did collapse, the villagers would believe that we pushed it over. The unfortunate thing about it was that green bamboo, while being sufficiently strong, is covered with a thin, slippery fuzz, and furthermore it bristles at the joints with long, exceedingly sharp needles. In our desperate heaving match our hands naturally slipped on the fuzz and impaled themselves on the needles. That gave us a good grip. Nothing like having your hands impaled on needles when you want to keep a good hold. Kitjil and Admo had time to rush to our aid, and they managed to get their poles firmly into the tree with the butts planted into the ground when the crazy Dyak up the pole



## CHAPTER 4: ADATS

*Adat* is a Dyak word that substitutes for a college education. It supplies the answer to all questions beginning with "Why—?" and any others for which the answer is not immediately at hand. By employing that single exasperating word, one can baffle the most astute interrogator and drive any earnest seeker after knowledge nuts.

Why is the *taladjang* bird a good omen? *Adat*. Why does a warrior file his teeth? *Adat*. Why do both men and women wear fiberrings? *Adat*. In a general sense *adat* means custom, but its use is carried to extremes. It is the product of thousands of years of habit; though the original meaning or purpose of an act may be lost in antiquity, it is still performed for no other reason than that it is *adat*. Once thousands of years ago a chief may have had a stroke of luck in which a *taladjang* bird played a prominent part. After that he regarded the bird as his lucky omen. Upon his death his son adopted the bird, then the tribe followed suit, and though no one today has any idea of how it came about, they still refuse to start a new venture until the *taladjang* bird has put in an appearance. No one knows who started the style in filed teeth, but sharpened fangs today are *adat*.





Oema Bem, a little run down at the heel, is typical of the *kampongs* in Borneo. Note tree-trunk ladder to verandah, and *sirap* roofing.





Dances in the jungle are performed on mats. Not much space is needed because most of the movements are muscular.



More than anything else, *adat* is responsible for the retrogression of the Dyaks. Once they were an intellectual, highly progressive race, driving forward toward civilization while other races were still trying to decide whether to live in trees or caves. But every advance these primitive free thinkers made established a precedent upon which to base an *adat*, from which the next generation started without inquiring into the whys or wherefores. There was no need to since it was already *adat*, and while they continued to get the same results as their forefathers, they lacked the fundamental knowledge on which to base the next step. Soon there were no next steps. Superstition replaced reasoning. In rare instances when an inventive fellow did come along, he was prevented from putting his ideas into effect by the horde of evil spirits hovering around to stomp on anybody not acting according to *adat*. For a few centuries the Dyaks continued to hold their own. Then one by one the more complicated *adats* became lost in the shuffle, until today the only ones surviving are those covering the most essential necessities of life.

I knew about *adats* but I didn't know how bad they were. I had the idea that if I presented things in the proper light, I would have no difficulty in getting Dyaks to listen to reason. Unfortunately, *adat* has no relation to reason. I found that out the first morning I crossed the river to the *kampong*, or native village, to see about getting a crew.

I took Achmed along to assist me. Malayan is the trade language of the East Indies, and even in the blackest interior of Borneo you are almost certain to run into somebody who speaks it. But a vocabulary that will carry you



through a nice social discourse becomes hopelessly inadequate once the subject of trade has been cautiously stalked, lured, baited and ambushed. Trade talk is like a coy maiden; it is hard to get at, but once you have it, you have your hands, ears and hair full.

We beached the canoe on a convenient shelf of mud and stepped out into it up to our knees. That was good stuff. It wasn't every *kampong* that could provide so soft a landing place for visiting canoes. No danger here of splitting a hull on the rocks. As for the minor disadvantage of wading through two feet of mud, far better to get your feet wet than to spend six months hollowing out another log to replace a broken boat. An added feature was that if you happened to have the itch, the mud had alleviating qualities. At the moment I didn't happen to have the itch so I couldn't appreciate the treatment.

A dozen men and women were standing along the shore carefully dipping water out of the river and dumping it over their heads. Only the day before I had noticed scores of them in swimming, splashing around as wholeheartedly as a bunch of young crocs, and this long distance approach to cleanliness had me baffled. Especially as it is much harder work to dip a bath out of the river than to fall in. Dyaks are fond of the water anyway, being a cleanly race in the general meaning of the word. They have their lapses, and their smells, but on the whole they are not averse to taking a bath when one happens to be handy, and even enjoying it when it becomes a community proposition. Needless to say, their bathing suits are most elementary, the bare essentials, as it were.

I asked about the *siram*, or water dipping ceremony, and



found that it was an *adat*. The witch doctor had decided the rice was getting near the harvesting stage, and dry weather was needed. It was a round-about explanation, but what it amounted to was that the river, being wet, was believed to have a lot of influence with the rains which were likewise wet. This intimate relationship was furthered by the friendship between the river ghosts and rain ghosts, so much so that a man bathing in the river might accidentally absorb a river ghost in his hair, whereupon it would be the duty of the rain ghosts to pour plenty of water upon this bearer of spirits to enable the stranded ghost to float home. Now supposing this ghost carrier happened to be standing in the rice paddy when the rain ghost effected his compatriot's rescue. Why, the deluge would ruin the whole crop. Thus the only way to avoid such a mishap was to stay out of the water, and to perform such ablutions as were necessary by dipping the water out in gourds and scanning each container to see that it held no spirits. Asked how they had come to this conclusion they frankly replied that they hadn't—that it was *adat*.

We ran into another *adat* twenty feet away. The place was teeming with them. The bank on this side of the river was about twenty feet high, and was composed of silt but, through some geological freak, embedded half way up was a huge boulder weighing several tons. Because this boulder had no reason to be there, it was regarded as an item of great spiritual significance. No one could pass it, going up or coming down, without spitting on it. No matter where you happened to be on the river's edge, if you wanted to enter the *kampong* you had to pass the rock and spit. Likewise no one in the *kampong* could go down to the river with-



out passing the expectorative boulder. The practice was all right during the dry season, but during the wet spell it called for considerable agility on the part of those going down. The bank became a greased skid, and those headed for the river had to do some tall spitting on the fly.

For the convenience of the infirm two tree trunks rested against the bank, and though they were almost vertical they did have notches every two feet or so to provide toe holds. A person in bare feet could hang on and work his way up without committing suicide, provided the notches weren't filled with slippery mud, but a white man in shoes would find it safest to call for a bos'n's chair and strong tow. Especially was this so coming down, in which case the notches ceased to be toe holds and became abrasive corrugations for any one so unfortunate as to start skidding.

Fortunately, on the day of my visit it was nice and dry. The sun was so hot and bright and clear that every time a Dyak spit on the rock it spurted steam and spit back. I didn't have to spit, being a good omen in my own right, and Achmed didn't have to because he was a Mohammedan. I had all I could handle wrestling with the tree-trunk staircase anyway.

At the head of the stairs was the *belawang* pole. Any one unexpectedly confronting this grisly totem pole after a long, hard climb up, would automatically be bowled back to the bottom. It is the most offensive, stinking phallic symbol I have ever encountered, and every Dyak *kampung* has one. Its purpose, aside from the obvious one of insuring the fecundity of the villagers, is to prevent evil spirits from entering the town. Every visitor has to pass the *belawang*



pole, and any spirits he might be harboring on his person are seized upon by the symbols on the pole and hung up to dry with the rest of the trophies. A figure carved of wood and brandishing a huge *mandau*, or Dyak sword, tops the *belawang* pole, to do battle with the tougher spirits not sufficiently cowed by the lesser symbols lower down on the pole.

The *belawang* pole is the center of worship as far as the Dyaks are concerned. It consists of a single tree trunk, the larger and higher the better, painstakingly carved from top to bottom with all manner of symbols. The workmanship ranges from the most skillful wood carving imaginable to crude scratches on the bark. If, in spite of the symbols on the pole, misfortune still dogs the *kampong*, additional idols are carved and hung in conspicuous places. Misfortune persisting, good-luck charms are added, medicinal leaves are hung like grass skirts from top to bottom, and baskets of ceremonial eggs are strung up for good measure.

To these inoffensive articles I have no objection. But in the course of years the *kampong*, by the natural law of averages, runs into major misfortunes such as will not be remedied by minor sacrifices. Then it becomes the duty of the witch doctor to perform a suitable ceremony involving the sacrifice of a chicken or a suckling pig. A year of drought, a few weeks of poor fishing, or a sudden scarcity of game will find the *belawang* pole blossoming with all manner of carcasses and stinking to high heaven. Flies in huge black clouds swarm around the place, and overhead tantalized vultures soar in dejected circles, unable to leave the scent of such rich feeding but afraid to land because of



the constant activity of the natives. So persistent are the vultures that I've often wondered why they don't drop from sheer starvation. It is *adat* that once a sacrifice has been hung on the pole it cannot be removed, so there it hangs and rots.

Achmed and I passed the fumes of this spirit fumigator, but not without some qualms of nausea. I broke through as I would dash through the smoke of a garbage dump fire, and in my blindness stumbled over a tiny bamboo picket fence erected around an *oebi*, or yam shoot, to protect it from the rooting hogs. It sent me sprawling into another one, and when I separated my ribs from the stakes my first thought was that I had committed hara-kiri. These little cone-shaped fences stuck up all over the place to protect vegetables may be the Dyak idea of agricultural insurance, but in my opinion they would be far more formidable as tank traps.

The Dyak agriculturist farms when the impulse and the omens move him. If he happens to have a sweet potato in his hand and has a sudden impulse to plant it, into the ground it goes. He might be sitting around with the boys in the middle of the street, spitting betel nut juice at the passing traffic—ants, spiders and suchlike—when he is seized with an overpowering yen to plant a spud. There is nothing for him but to dig a hole and bury the thing. He does this with an air of profound preoccupation, while the rest of the group watch the removal of each handful of earth with the same fascination that hovers over any group of sidewalk engineers. The ground may be packed as hard as rock from the passage of thousands of bare feet; it matters not. It may be right in the center of the most used path;



that doesn't matter either. Once the little pickets are put up, traffic will detour and the sweet potato will be free to develop into a fine, healthy plant. These private plots for individual plants may be fine for developing self-reliant vegetables, but they are hell on a dark night. Many a swain, leaving his inamorata more hurriedly than he had anticipated, has been brought to grief by a midget enclosure erected on the spur of the moment.

By this time Achmed and I were feeling like a couple of runners-up in an obstacle race. Ahead of us was the main street, which, as in all Dyak *kampongs*, is the one and only street. This thoroughfare is mostly laid out parallel to the river, and the size of the town can immediately be ascertained by the length of its main stem. Long Iram, one of the largest *kampongs* in the interior of Borneo, is drawn out for nearly three-quarters of a mile. No one knows who is responsible for this civic planning which makes a town so impractical for defensive purposes, but much as some of the more war-minded chiefs would like to change it, they are powerless. It is *adat*.

A Dyak long-house is pretty much of a community affair, and a man's home is his relatives' castle. The Dyaks are inordinately proud of their dwelling places, and justifiably so. In the hut department of architecture the Dyak holds top place. He can do more with a few logs and a bale of hay than any race of primitive folk I have ever encountered. His house is no trivial affair of mouldering thatch enclosing a few yards of soggy ground, but an elevated structure anywhere up to six hundred feet long and forty feet deep, and sporting a verandah facing the street along its full length.



The average long-house is raised about ten feet above the ground, but some of the more pretentious go up fifteen feet. This allows a nice current of air to drift under the flooring, thus sharply reducing the number of vermin that might otherwise find haven there. It has the added advantage of preventing dry rot in the flooring, and though the supporting posts may rot through every year or so, it is a lot easier to replace a post now and then, than have the whole house suddenly drop in your lap. Then, too, by raising the house, room is provided underneath for the pigs and chickens, and since the occupants of the house sleep with one ear to the floor, chicken theft is practically a lost art in Borneo.

The long-houses are divided into apartments, the head of the family occupying the central and most pretentious room, aunts and uncles on either side, cousins farther removed, and distant blood relatives and shirttail relations on the ends. Each apartment opens onto the verandah, and it is here that most of the living is done. The rooms are used almost exclusively for cooking and sleeping. Entrance to these *amins*, or long-houses, is effected by climbing a notched pole set at an uncomfortable slant and unencumbered by such safety devices as hand railings. The pole dips, sways and bucks every time one tries to climb it, but once you get the hang you can hit it like a diving board and bounce right on in.

There is nothing crude about the decorations on the homes of the more powerful families. The verandah railing will be carved into dragons, birds, and beasts, each figure complete to scales, feathers, or fur. Years might be spent



carving a single rail, and the accuracy with which the favorite subject, the dragon, is reproduced leads me to believe that if such a thing as a dragon does not now exist on the island, it did until recent times. Doors, too, are objects of great art and pride. The bas-relief work on a chief's ebony door would hold its own in any art competition. Admire a Dyak's doorway and the place is yours; deride it and your head is his.

Because the Dyak's home is all important, one does not drift casually from one door to the next. There are certain idols to appease, certain *adats* to observe, and numerous omens to propitiate before one can tackle the entrance pole. Each house has a patch of medicinal herbs in front, surrounded by the inevitable picket row of stakes, and it is advisable to spit liberally in this direction. I sometimes suspect the Dyak's habit of chewing betel nut is not so much fondness for the stimulant as need for the expectorant. Many an *adat* in Borneo would be better served if the omens were replaced by nice brass gabboons. Opposite the sacred herb garden or sometimes in it, is a mound of round stones symbolizing the wealth and lineage of the family. These stones are of tremendous significance. Not only do they attest to the long line of warriors from which the present family head or chief is descended, but all the past braveries and courage of the clan are believed stored in them. Every head-hunt, ceremony, or celebration finds the stones playing a prominent part. They must be respectfully saluted in passing. The last obstacle to be passed before risking the pole are the family idols. These ugly wooden monstrosities glare fiendishly at all visitors. Some are



armed with wooden *mandaus*, some merely with a handful of magic leaves, but whatever their equipment, their object is to frighten away any evil spirits the visitor might have smuggled past the *belawang* pole. If the stranger proves strong enough to climb the bank, passes the odoriferous *belawang* pole, survives the magic herb garden, keeps a brave face in front of the household idols and still has strength enough to climb the pole to the verandah, he is a man of courage and a welcome guest.

We walked up the street, stared at by curious villagers leaning over verandah rails. Men and women going to or coming from the rice paddies passed us with friendly smiles, and I couldn't help but admire their marvelous physiques. No question about it, they have wonderful bodies, nor is this a subject which excessive clothing leaves open to doubt. They're put together the way men and women should be assembled, though to pick on a minor point, the men as a whole are a little too short for perfect symmetry. The *kampong* street cleaning department was everywhere in evidence in the form of patchy curs and rangy hogs, and to add to the activity of the scene, tame monkeys, flashy game cocks and kids swarmed over everything that provided a knob to hang on. It was hard to tell whether the monkeys were imitating the youngsters or vice versa, but whatever the case it was evident that both were as at home in the tree tops as on the ground. Nature pulled a dirty trick on the human race when she deprived it of tails. Not only would these Dyak boys, and most other boys, have been a lot safer with such equipment, but they could have had a lot more fun.



The *amin aja* or chief's house was the fifth in line on the right. I had no difficulty in recognizing it. It stood about five feet higher than its neighbors, and must have been a good fifty feet longer. As an added flourish, the roof of the chief's personal apartment was about five feet higher than the rest of the house, though in this case I think the dwelling should be dignified by the name of lodge. House is a rather inadequate term for so ornate an edifice. Even the thatch on the roof seemed to come from a higher order of palm, the hogs under the porch seemed fatter, and the very fungus flourishing on the network of supporting posts that raised the palace twenty feet above the ground seemed conscious of their superior position. A monkey indiscreetly burrowing into the thatch in pursuit of a cockroach was bowled over by its mother who was properly horrified at the sacrilege.

I paused in front to admire the magic herbs, pantomimed amazement as to the size of the mound of ancestral stones, and then made a flying rush at the entrance pole. My momentum carried me up. Passersby paused to watch. The chief leaned over the rail in interest, and the rest of his family, numbering almost a hundred, draped themselves along the verandah in grave amusement. No one smiled. No one laughed out loud. They were being very polite, painfully so. Would I not have made it, that would have been bad business, too, because Dyaks regard falling off the front stairs as a bad omen of serious proportions. If you fall off and break your neck it's worse.

And thus I arrived at the verandah of Taman Ding, chief of the *kampung* of Long Iram.



I don't know why it is, but every chief in Borneo is old and has been head of the *kampong* for more years than man can remember. You never encounter a young chap just assuming the responsibilities of leadership. Theoretically the chieftainship is handed down from father to son, but it has been my observation that whole generations come and go while the same old chief sits out in the sun and tells lies. Then suddenly the old boy is gone, and from some concealed storage bin they dig out a first-born son put away at some forgotten period to keep until needed.

The chief who welcomed us filled all the requirements. He had just enough teeth left to worry a betel nut without seriously damaging it. His smile was a frightening thing, though wrinkles in his crafty face were deep enough to bury any lesser change of expression. He was a wiry devil in spite of his age, and strangely alert. I saw at once that if I was going to do business with him I would have to think fast or he would skin me to my eye teeth.

In honor of the occasion he had dressed himself in a new sarong, worn not as a skirt but as a *ba* or breech cloth twisted into a soft rope. To make a garment of the rope it was passed around the back, brought forward and twisted over the stomach. The two ends were then passed between the legs, and up and under the belt in the rear. This left about two feet of surplus material to flop down behind like twin tails. It was the national style, and even up in Apo-Kajan where breech cloths were woven of *kapoewa*, or tree bark, the men persisted in adhering to the trend. If the cloths chafed the legs a little, it wasn't anything a strong man couldn't endure.



And of course Taman Ding wore his *mandau* strapped to his waist. A Dyak would no more be caught without that formidable weapon attached to his person than a white man would be caught without his pants. It was so essential that a man deprived of it in battle has been known to slink around the outskirts of the *kampong* like a pariah for weeks, not daring to be seen in public until he has secured another one to conceal his nakedness. Proud as the Dyaks are of their carved verandahs and doorways, their real craftsmanship is lavished upon their *mandaus*.

As a weapon, the *mandau* is a thirty-inch combination of battle ax, sword, cutlass and machete. The blade is about two feet long by three inches wide, whetted to razor edge sharpness on one side, and nearly a quarter inch thick on the other to give it weight. When they swing, they want it to mean something. A slight curve to the edge makes it especially effective in a cutting stroke, such as a blow aimed at the base of the neck. Though the blade is intricately engraved, the real soul of the instrument is in its handle, usually of ivory, though sometimes of ebony or horn. Dragons, human heads, reptiles and every conceivable form of Oriental symbolism are delicately carved thereon with such loving attention to detail that if it be an open-jawed dragon represented there, you can see every feature of the mouth down to the tonsils. Instead of the weapon being notched for every human life it has taken, a tuft of the victim's hair is added to the handle. A bald-headed *mandau*, no matter how handsome its carving, is still regarded by its owner as an inferior weapon until the sorry condition can



be remedied. The chief, I noticed, had more hair on his *mandau* than on his head.

When not actively engaged in manslaughter, the *mandau* is housed in a carved wooden scabbard, which also supplies quarters for the *njoe*, a dagger-like knife used for cutting meat, sharpening sticks and other prosaic tasks. And for trail cutting a working *mandau* is employed, as distinct from the dress *mandau* as the old ax on the chopping block is distinct from a French battle ax.

As guest of honor the chief gave me a raised bench close to the fire that blazed merrily in spite of the heat of the day. The fireplace was nothing more than a layer of clay on the verandah floor, and most of the smoke that went up from the fire hit the roof and came down again. Such a ventilating system might be good in cold weather, but on a hot day the only thing that could be said for it was that it kept away the flies. I sat there and sweated and dripped until I endangered the fire, but if I turned into a smoked herring I couldn't risk the future of my trip by offending the old man with a protest. He just smiled and inched closer to the fire when the sun got around to where the shadows were cooler and deeper than before.

"You have a lot of strong men?" I began by the way of a prelude to the business at hand. This was about two hours after my arrival, and I had already steamed away five pounds.

"Plenty of strong men?" He exclaimed in Malayan. "Why my men are so strong they can paddle a canoe ten miles on dry land."



I nodded, unimpressed. "But are they brave? Strong men are no good if they are cowards."

"Brave?" repeating the question as though he couldn't believe the implied slander, "why they are utterly fearless. See this"—holding up a tremendous crocodile tooth—"we never kill crocodiles to get these. My men pull 'em out of live ones."

I let that ride. "How about work? I've heard down the river that the warriors of Long Iram——"

"Lies, all lies," he interrupted. "People down the river burn to death when we fire their huts—I mean when their huts burn down—because they are too lazy to run. My boys can paddle from sun-up to sun-up without tiring. When they come to a *kiham*, or portage, do you know what they do?"

I didn't, but I wasn't going to believe it anyway.

"They don't even unload. They carry canoe and cargo and all. If you want a ride, you can sit in too."

I saw the time was ripe for me to strike. I knew better than to haggle. No Dyak, be he ever so poor, will haggle. Once a price is set, that's what the price is going to be or no sale. The trick comes in doing your best with mental suggestion to set a low price before the subject is mentioned. If you are successful the chief will accept a low value, but if you miss, it's either bust the bank at the start or go home.

"I need eight canoes to take me three villages up the river. I will pay you in silver for them, and for yourself I have this beautiful agate." I offered him a grey and orange agate bead.

His eyes sparkled. His hand reached out and I knew the deal was set.



"You want to leave now?"

"In the morning."

"Good. We have fine omens."

But at that moment a youth passed before the verandah carrying a splintered paddle. The chief called out sharply in Dyak. The boy replied in a sad tone and I heard something about a bad river spirit.

The chief turned to me. "Maybe tomorrow. Maybe day after. The river spirit broke his paddle and I will have to get the witch doctor to find out what we have done to make him mad. This is a terrible omen."

"But——"

"I can say nothing. It is *adat*."

And I knew better than to say anything to that.

Achmed and I left. I made the stairs in two strides, one short and one the rest of the way down. Back on the bank we found our canoe so tightly stuck in the mud we had to call on two Dyaks to help pull it out. They called in four more. For boys who carried canoes around *kihams* they weren't doing so well. When an ailing croc about ten feet long floated feebly down the middle of the stream they fled yelping for the bank. We shoved the canoe the rest of the way ourselves and paddled home in thoughtful silence.

Three days later we received word that the river spirits had been appeased, and that the omens were again favorable. This time I knew better than to suggest a morning start.

"Tell the chief to get the boys ready," I instructed the messenger. "We're leaving now."

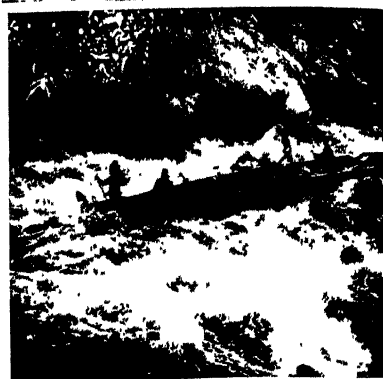




*Mandaus.*

The elaborately carved hand grip is of horn.





River travel in inner Borneo.

- |                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. Boh River.     | 3. Boh River. |
| 2. Mahakam River. | 4. Tjehang.   |
| 5. Tjehang.       |               |



## CHAPTER 5: MY CANOE CARAVAN

THE CHIEF had the boys ready. No difficult feat, that, since a Dyak wears everything he needs, and at any hour of the day or night he is prepared for anything from a thousand-mile trek to scratching fleas. If he is going on a trek, he stands up; if he is scratching fleas, he lies down. Otherwise there is no difference in the preparations.

I, on the other hand, had my role of explorer to play, and that meant I had to lug along a suitable supply of props. I had a compass so that if we got lost I would know in which direction we were lost most. I had a first aid kit packed with fever remedies, snake bite serum, bandages, antiseptics and purges so that no member of our force would die without proper medical supervision. I had three Eyemo motion picture cameras and several still cameras with a proper supply of complementary lenses and filters, plus film. Then there were my rifles, pistols, ammunition and four crates of trade trinkets. Knives, blankets, mosquito netting, clothes, dynamite, fireworks. . . . I wasn't an explorer, I was a catalogue.

It took ten minutes to get the junk ready, and ten minutes to cross the river. But in that time four demons and a half



a dozen evil spirits had arrived ahead of me. We couldn't start now until a full moon had canceled their ominous omens. I could be the most powerful ghost breaker in Borneo, but I couldn't do anything with *adat*. Maybe I could have whipped the spirits, but the demons got me down. There was one vindictive rascal, the Mud Demon, who had snapped at a man's foot and gouged out a deep wound. Actually the man had been pushing out a canoe and had cut his foot on a shell buried in the mud, but there was nothing that could convince him he hadn't been bitten by the Mud Demon as a warning that he should not make the trip. The Mud Demon is closely related to the River Demon, so that meant the river was against us, too. The river, flowing between thousands of other demons for hundreds of miles, could summon every conceivable form of spirit down to the last ghost of a ghost by marriage to bar our progress with misfortune, so the only thing I could do was accept the inevitable with as much philosophy and as little bad grace as possible. In other words, I raised hell but it didn't do any good.

Wang Lo was disgusted. Achmed, Wirio and the other Malays had certain feminine attractions in back of the barracks that did much to assuage their impatience, if they had any. I decided that if ever we were to get started, the thing for us to do was load the canoes ourselves, eat in them, sleep in them and otherwise prepare ourselves for any momentary lull in the spirit offensive. If ever a favorable omen turned up we could shove off before the demons clamped down again. Picking out a nice soft shelf in the mud at the edge of the bank, we made ourselves comfortable and prepared



to sit it out. The rich ripeness of the *belawang* pole settled around us like the effluvium of a packing plant. The flies droned with a fierceness that held no hint of monotony. The mud bubbled, dried and cracked in the hot sun. We were staging our own spirit war of nerves.

The next day a miracle of major importance stunned the entire *kampong*. Taman Ding nearly swallowed his betel nut. A *taladjang* bird, Ding's favorite omen, flew right down on his lodge pole, strutted there until the whole population had time to see this evidence of spiritual favoritism, then flew up in a climbing turn to the left and took off across the river. So emphatic and all-inclusive was this demonstration of demon amnesty that every unfavorable omen that had ever afflicted the *kampong* was automatically wiped out. For the time being, the war of the spirits was suspended in a state of armistice.

Did this work to my advantage? Certainly not. If I thought the forty-eight paddlers who were to take me upstream were crazy enough to leave a *kampong* just when it was due for a tremendous stroke of good fortune I was even crazier than they suspected me of being. Lady Luck was due to breeze into camp in grand style, and they wanted to be around when she pulled in. I don't know what they expected to happen, but if the skies had rained roast pheasant and pork chops they would not have been surprised.

There was only one thing for me to do if I didn't want to spend the rest of my life sitting around at the whim of the demons, both good and bad. Since the Dyaks evidently expected a concrete demonstration of demoniac charity, it was up to me to supply it. I ordered Wang Lo to dig out a



sack full of cat's eye agate beads, and with him at my heels tackled the path past the *belawang* pole.

We found the villagers gathered in happy, expectant groups scanning the skies for the first manifestation of their good fortune. They really didn't expect to see it come skidding around the pole all covered with mud and mosquito bites. It took some fast talking on my part, and a liberal distribution of agate beads on the part of Wang Lo to convince them that this was indeed it. Taman Ding grumbled slightly at the size of his gift.

"A *taladjang* bird has stronger magic than this," he objected, scrutinizing his handful of beads.

"It was a little bird," I pointed out. "A young one. It would lose face if it thought you did not like its magic. Humor it along now and maybe when it grows up it will come back with stronger magic."

"How do you know all this?" he asked shrewdly.

"How did I know this? Didn't I send the bird to announce the coming of these gifts? How else would it happen?" And since the chief couldn't think of a handy answer, he had to let it go at that, though it was with some reluctance.

When the villagers were at last convinced no more manna was in the offing, and when they could no longer think of any reasons why we shouldn't start upstream, the men appointed by Taman Ding to serve as my paddlers gradually drifted down to the river, stepped into place and casually paddled away. Sitting in the last canoe to leave, I could scarcely believe we were actually underway. That *taladjang*



bird had some powerful stuff on the ball, at that, even for a little one. I began to look around for more of them.

The Dyak canoe, in addition to being a highly efficient bit of naval architecture, is also something in the way of a work of art. A good many of them would be worthy pieces in any museum of fine art. And they are as uncomfortable as they are efficient. In rough water they are actually vicious.

The canoes selected for our trip were of the long variety, designed to haul large cargoes in smooth water. Each was hollowed out from the trunk of a single tree, and because the wood was hard, construction was not a simple process. Farther up the river where the water was swift and full of boulders, smaller canoes would be used, made of a soft, but tough wood, that is almost impervious to rocks.

Because our canoes were the cargo boats of the river, they were built up along the sides with extra planks, to increase their cubic capacity. The general idea was that these planks were to be fitted tightly against the gunwale, and would thus raise the freeboard by a couple of feet. As a matter of fact about the only thing they contributed was a false note of security. The added planking, held in place only with wooden pegs, usually left a gap of a couple of inches above the hull, so while you went drifting serenely along high above the waves, any tiny ripple could slap through the crack and fill your back pockets with water.

The men paddled standing up or sitting down as the spirit moved them, but when the going got tough they usually stood up to put the pressure on. The way our water caravan was organized, we gave them plenty of room to work. The canoes were about thirty-five feet long with six paddlers to



a boat. A mound of cargo separated each paddler, and in the event of a catastrophe the paddler was to grab as much equipment as he could from the pile in front of him and head for the brush. In actual practice about all he ever grabbed was his skin. One of my men rode in idle splendor in each craft while I brought up the rear, a place of advantage from which I could witness each sinking as it occurred. Wang Lo, a hand camera in his lap, led the flotilla. It was his job to film any rare glimpses of wild life we might chance upon while suddenly rounding a bend. The plan would have worked better if that Chinese rascal could have stayed awake.

We hadn't been gone an hour before I realized that we continued to remain afloat more because of the natural buoyancy of the wood in the hull than because of any displacement of the water. We didn't displace it; we just transposed it, from outside in. I sat in a pool half way to my hips and soaked. Of course we had been warned of this, and had made preparations for it, but just the same no amount of warning will ever take the place of a few hours of actual soaking.

Our cargo was adequately protected from the water by rubber sheets or sealed tins. Film, for instance, came in tins. The edge of the tin was sealed with adhesive tape, and this in turn was sealed with a resilient gum that would not crack under abuse. Cameras we packed in tin cans and likewise seals. Bulkier objects were wrapped in rubber sheets or heavy tarps and placed on blocks above the water that slopped around in the bottom. Every time we stopped the stuff was unloaded and exposed to the sun to dry out



seepage and get the jump on the mildew and toad stools. On such occasions I could only join the rest of my junk and, hoisting my rear heavenward, hope the sun would have some beneficial effects on my joints.

Buoyant banana stalks and lengths of bamboo furnished our shipwreck insurance. Each bundle or tin was connected to a float by thirty feet of clothesline, the idea being that if the boat turned turtle we could still salvage half the stuff by pulling in such floats as didn't snarl on the way down. The first time we had occasion to use our salvage department two paddlers got tangled in the ropes and nearly drowned. There were so many floats bobbing around it looked as if we were seining for salmon, but at least we did get most of the stuff back.

The scenery above Long Iram consists of rich, mucky flatlands that bring the jungle right to the water's edge so you can't see what lies beyond, alternating with high, stony hills that do the same thing. Thus, as far as the river tourist is concerned, one is as bad as the other, with one exciting exception. Where the hills come down to the river the water is swift and turbulent. You get wetter than usual.

There is one feature of the landscape that is peculiar to river travel in Borneo. It completely dominates everything else, yet I have never heard it mentioned before. That is the fanny of the paddler who stands in front of you. Landscapes may come and go; rough water replace calm water; rain replace bright skies; but always affronting your gaze is the expanse of brown skin and inadequate sarong that constitutes your "view." Sometimes I think something ought to be done about it. I may be vague on some of the mountain



ranges and escarpments in central Borneo, but I know the tattoo marks of every paddler who ever outraged my sensibilities.

The question of food on an expedition such as ours is not as complicated as it may seem. Almost any old log would furnish a meal for a dozen men, and some of the choicer fallen trees could feed an army. Not that the wood was particularly nutritious, but the white grubs concealed therein packed a tremendous calory content. The Dyaks ate them like popcorn, smacking their lips over the more succulent wood borers with every evidence of gastronomic ecstasy. There were times when a depleted larder forced me to compete with the anteaters for my meals, and I can assure you the white grubs are not as bad as they look. Their taste is somewhat salty.

The staple diet, of course, is rice. No meal in Borneo is complete without rice served in one of a thousand different ways. It can be ground into flour, stuffed into fish or fowl, boiled or baked. Mixed with fish roe, or bird eggs, it is delicious, and if the eggs are a little gamey, or somewhat advanced in their period of incubation, a few handfuls of red pepper and other East Indies spices will go a long way toward neutralizing any unpleasant taste. Rice mixed with fruit or wild honey makes an excellent dessert. In short, rice is not only the staff of life, it is practically life itself. Fortunately it is grown everywhere in Borneo, so we had only to take along enough to last us from one *kampung* to the next. If it weren't for the spirits we could have got along very nicely since the *kampongs* are seldom more than two or three days' journey apart. But a bad omen might hold us in



some mudhole for a week, so we had to carry a huge reserve. Good omens or bad, the men had to have their rice.

Our bags of rice and a supply of salt and spices were about all we really needed to carry for food, the jungle being fully capable of supplying everything else, but because I thought my stomach didn't have a native's elasticity I had my personal supply of canned beans, sardines, preserves and soup concentrates. A good thing it was, too, because there were a couple of times early in the game when my squeamishness had me on the verge of starving to death in the midst of plenty. After the canned goods were gone, and I was toughened to the country, I noticed my squeamishness vanishing with the last empty can. Monkeys, grub worms, snakes, crocodiles and vampire bats—they all taste the same in hot curry.

Which brings up another dietary point. Amongst the Dyaks, anything that moves is edible. So far as I have been able to determine, they draw the line at nothing. They do concede the advisability of removing the heads from poisonous snakes and the stings from hornets but otherwise they reduce waste to a minimum, not so much as a food conservation measure, since food is plentiful, but as a measure to conserve energy, of which there is very little. Then, too, there was always the danger of offending the spirit of some beast if certain portions of its anatomy were considered unfit to eat.

Knowing the omnivorousness of my boys, I set about building up some good will the first day out. For supper that night I selected a plump-looking crocodile that had reared up on his four legs on shore. He was just getting



ready to make a rush for the water when I slapped a slug from my rifle between his knobby eyes. The echoes of the shot hadn't stopped rolling before I realized I had somehow committed a breach of etiquette. Every boy looked at me as if I had just axed his favorite grandmother. One of them began to wail, and that was enough to set the pitch for the rest of them. Each picked a note horribly off-key from the others and proceeded to work it for all it was worth. The din was God-awful.

In time the wailing subsided enough for me to learn that I had not only shot a crocodile but had also killed a weird assortment of demons of the most malignant variety. It developed that earlier in the season the father of Loedjoek, one of my boys, had gone to the river to bathe, and had subsequently become crocodile bait. His demise had been sudden and complete. Now, according to the rules of demonology, Adjang's spirit entered the crocodile that had eaten him, there to reside until the crocodile in turn was eaten by something else, at which time he might escape to become a free spirit or he might be forced to take occupancy, along with the crocodile's ghost, in the body of this third party. All this was clear and easily understandable, but where the tragedy came in was that no one knew which crocodile had eaten whom. Crocs travel for miles up and down the river. The very one I shot might well be the one who had snapped up the old man. At any rate the Dyaks were taking no chances—he was a particularly vindictive old man—and I had unquestionably created a very bad omen. There was nothing for it but to camp for the night,



but on the opposite side of the river from the dead croc, and wait for a favorable omen.

I could see that there was something in this omen business as soon as I looked at the campsite we had to contend with. If I had been free to pick a camp, the hole we ended up in would have been the last spot I would have selected on a list of swamps, but because the spirits forced us to camp immediately we had to take what we got. As leader of the expedition it would seem I had something to say in the matter, and as leader of the expedition I did. But this wasn't part of the expedition. This was a command from the spirit world. My purely temporal authority ended the moment I stepped on a spirit's toes. So we camped in the mud on a mattress of living leeches, under a blanket of flies and mosquitoes. I lost enough blood that night to break a blood bank.

The domestic arrangements of a jungle camp follow no set pattern. It is all right to say you pitch camp, light the camp fires, start the cooking and then roll out the blankets. Under such circumstances you crawl into your sheets and lie dreamily on the ground while a camp-cooked meal settles comfortably, the dying fire crackles and snaps, and the stars come out in the sky overhead. Then you go to sleep. Sometimes that happens. At least I've heard about it often enough to believe there must be some truth to the story, though I have never actually encountered such blissful conditions. Whenever I have pitched camp it has been the signal for the quiet jungle to wake up and start work on an all-out offensive, the reserves pitching in beside the veterans.

The program we tried to follow was to camp before dark.



in order to clear the site of snakes while we could still see them. A crew of men armed with *mandaus* slashed a clearing out of the green brush, leaving a sharp stubble over which you spread a tarp if you had one, or your bare skin if you were a Dyak. The same crew also cut the dry wood for fires while another crew started the cooking. Achmed did the cooking for me, Wang Lo and the other Malays. The Dyaks took turns playing chef for themselves. In deep jungle there was no such thing as really dry wood; dead wood slightly spongy and water soaked had to do. Meals usually emerged from such fires more smoked than cooked. Smoke went up in clouds to catch in the crowns of the trees that joined overhead, and then gradually settled to the ground when there was no place else for it to go. At such times the brown figures around the fires looked like phantoms in a badly scorched fog, but at least the acrid fumes kept the mosquitoes and stinging flies away. As a matter of fact, if the spongy wood was low on smoke content the Dyaks threw on freshly cut brush.

After the evening meal I liked to get out an old portable phonograph and play through a dozen precious records including such soothing items as "St. Louis Blues" and "Beale Street Mamma." "St. Louis Blues" always brought down the house, especially among tribes that had never heard of such a thing as canned music, but the trouble was that the natives always thought I was playing the box in their honor. They insisted upon honoring me likewise, with native music of their own composition. For hours afterward I was sorry I had brought up the subject; they continued to beat drums and howl away at the stars with all the harmony of a pack



of love-sick dogs at full moon. I finally had to put the music box away, to bring it forth only on state occasions.

By 7:00 P.M. on an average night we were ready to make a stab at going to sleep. Sunset hits at 6:00 P.M. and total darkness at 6:01. An hour of fussing around, oiling cameras, greasing guns and sharpening *mandaus* under the light of a gasoline storm lantern usually took care of the time between supper and bedtime. There were no dishes to wash for the crew, the only sign of such swank being the tin plate and cutlery Achmed used in serving me, a tribute to my rank as leader. The plate, he found, was easily cleaned by scouring it out with wood ashes and wiping it off on the tail of his sarong. The cutlery he just shoved into the ground a couple of times.

Now comes the business of going to bed. A Dyak squatting before the fire simply falls over backward. Sticks, stones and roots that happen to be underneath him are removed after he stretches out. In that way he can be sure of removing only those which affect him, and not go to a lot of work throwing away stones he might never roll on. Swampy ground, instead of being regarded as a hardship, is considered a convenience. Plenty of mud to slap on insect bites. Soft, too, to fit the hips.

For my part, I spread a tarp on the ground, carefully removed all foreign matter from underneath, knocked down the stubble, spread out a blanket over the tarp and gingerly let myself down. Next I removed my canvas shoes and hung them on a stick above the ground so they would not take root during the night. My clothes I took off so I could check my hide for leeches, infected bites and other evidences of



jungle spite. Leeches were cut off with a sharp knife, and infected areas were cleansed and doused with antiseptic. That done I put my clothes back on, flopped down on the blanket and waited for the mosquitoes. If I was lucky I would go to sleep first, and after that I didn't mind what happened. But if the mosquitoes got there first I was doomed to remain wide awake while the first arrivals went back for friends, relatives and friends of relatives way unto the third generation.

Such was the procedure I followed on the first night out. At midnight I was still swinging at pests, both real and imaginary. Since I itched all over in one tremendous itch, I had no way of telling the real from the imaginary anyway, so I got as much satisfaction out of swinging as I did out of hitting. I must have knocked myself out because morning staggered out of the mists in some unaccountable fashion and the next thing I knew a troop of monkeys were raising cain in the trees overhead.

About monkeys. They are cute little fellows, the clowns of the jungle, as it were, and they look strangely human when toasted on the end of a stick, but just the same they are a frightful pain in the neck. These monkeys that came to visit us that ghastly dawn were a sociable lot, and they had a lot of friends who likewise had an extensive calling list. We humans presented a spectacle that apparently was worth calling up all their friends to witness, because before breakfast was on the fire the trees were overflowing with little brown fellows running mostly to tail. They swung around industriously, falling from great heights and saving themselves from destruction by catching on little more



than cobwebs. And chatter! Their vocal efforts were so filled with obscenities, so vituperative and violent it's a wonder they didn't jolt themselves right off their perches.

But there is another thing about monkeys that is worse even than the indecency of their language. That is their carelessness. Watch one of those little critters scamper for awhile, a veritable dynamo of fur, and it stands to reason that such activity cannot be nourished by thin air alone. Its arboreal activity is matched only by the activity of its digestive tract, and from the horrendous results scattered around our camp that morning one would gather that the whole five hundred devils had been feasting on strong laxatives. We, and I mean we, looked like the floor of a crowded chicken coop.

But at least it was daylight. The night was over.



## CHAPTER 6: THE RIVER — IN GOOD SPIRITS AND BAD

THE MAHAKAM RIVER with all its tributaries is the Mississippi of Borneo, but even so it can become a dismal little stream when the heat is on. When we hit it the rainy season was still a month away. That doesn't mean it didn't rain. It just didn't rain every minute of the day. A thunder storm would come up, drop a ton of water in the canoes and vanish in a haze of sun-streaked steam. Then we would paddle, sweat and stink while the flies worked their way into our hair and nibbled at our scalps. The water level of the river could drop as much as six feet within the space of a few hours, and it could jump fifteen feet in as many minutes. There was no controlling one's plans when dealing with such eccentricity. The spirits, of course, were to blame.

A few days above Long Iram and just north of *kampung* Ma Mehak the Mahakam began to tighten up. High hills with granite promontories squeezed the river into a narrow channel in which boulders as large as houses furnished convenient lodges for a thousand river devils. In negotiating rapids we followed a procedure that is standard the world over. If we could get through with paddles, poles and ropes,



we went through; if a waterfall blocked the way we went around. Any maelstrom short of a fall was regarded as navigable water, not because the Dyaks were exceptionally fine rivermen, but because they hated like hell to get out and portage.

Wang Lo was in the lead canoe as usual when we encountered our first fast water. We had changed canoes and crews at each of the *kampongs* at which we stopped, so we were now using the twenty-foot canoes made of softer wood. Four paddlers to a canoe instead of six, but they could really make those hollowed out logs skim along. Theoretically, these canoes are strong enough to ram a boulder and knock chips from it in passing. With such craft and with a fresh crew of agile paddlers who were thoroughly acquainted with every inch of the river, the sight of those wildly galloping waves didn't bother me half as much as it should have.

I saw Wang Lo duck his head as the spray hit but when the canoe came around on the upstream side of a huge boulder, the yellow shiny face of my number one assistant cameraman was topside and beaming. He was bracing himself with one hand on a spear stuck in the bottom while the other held an Eyemo camera with which he appeared to be filming the wild scene. At least he held the machine to his eye from time to time and wobbled it around in the direction of various objects. I couldn't help but admire his audacity even while deploring the waste of film. At the rate he was pitching around, any pictures he might get would be so blurred as to be indistinguishable. Always provided,



of course, that his lens wasn't already so misted over by spray that he couldn't even register a blur.

Another huge boulder loomed in the way, foaming at the mouth and lifting a snarling lip of water in happy anticipation of a big feed. The boys came up in the lee of the boulder, out of the fierce current, and a lithe Dyak leaped like a cat from the canoe to the rock, whipping a rope around it almost as soon as his feet touched. With this towline the other boys beat down the lip of foam and pulled around. Wang Lo didn't look so chipper after this feat. He dropped to the bottom of the canoe and was hanging to the gunwales with both hands. He cast a dismal glance in my direction where I sat rocking gently in the slack water below the rapids, but there was nothing I could do.

As soon as the dugout cleared the rock the Dyak with the rope leaped into the stream with a tremendous shove and on they went for the next obstruction, ready to repeat the maneuver. Only they never did. A cross current kicked up by some resentful river spirit spun the craft in a complete circle, whipped it downstream and smacked it nose on into the rock they had just quitted. It—the canoe—split beautifully. Half a canoe came shooting around each side of the rock. The Dyaks were likewise evenly divided. So was my cargo. Only Wang Lo remained, spread-eagled against the boulder by the pressure of the water.

While the rest of the boys paddled in to rescue their companions as they emerged from the chute, and to salvage as much stuff as possible, I shouted advice, all bad, to Wang Lo. Even from where I was I could see the boulder



was too water-polished to climb, so no matter what advice was given, there was only one result possible. Poor Wang Lo had to cast off as best he could and ride through under his own headway. This he was unwilling to do, but an unexplainable shift of the current did it for him. Down he came.

First, all I could see were feet. Then his head bobbed to the surface while he gasped frantically. Down went his head, and his feet, still slippered, waved wildly. More splashes, more gasping and more feet. I urged my paddlers over to pick him up. His shirt had caught a huge bubble of air, and this, acting like a life belt, held his rear end and feet above water while his head persisted in remaining in the depths. I made a grab for the middle of the bubble and pulled for all I was worth. A black thatch of hair emerged in a spasm of bubbles and poor Wang Lo's moon face broke the surface. He was all but drowned.

Not until I struggled to get him over the side did I discover the reason for his peculiar method of descent. In one hand, firmly clutched in a death grip, was the Eyemo camera. That was what had been holding his head under while his feet threshed around in the air. We towed him ashore and bailed him out, but not until he was able to sit up under his own power did he relinquish his grip on the camera. Then he parted with it reluctantly.

It was a beautiful case of photographer's instinct. At the peril of his life he had saved his camera and the precious film. Even if the pictures weren't any good his heroic sacrifice of self made them worth saving. I opened his wet Eyemo camera, curious to see how it had survived the vio-



lent bath. The inside was perfectly dry and in fine working condition. Only there was no film in it! Except for that minor oversight Wang Lo had scored a perfect scoop. It wasn't the first time my enterprising half caste had made that mistake, but in view of his sorry condition I decided the less said about it the better. I congratulated him heartily and left him to dry out while I joined the rest of the boys in diving for salvage.

The banana stalk floats to which most of my equipment was attached had done a perfect job. They floated so lightly, and responded so quickly to the whims of the current that they had dragged cans of film over the rocky bottom until they had been battered to pieces; they had smacked a camera against a rock so hard the lens looked like ground glass; and the foodstuffs had been towed through the water at such a pace the rubber sheet split. On the whole we scored a nearly one hundred per cent recovery with a salvage value of exactly zero. A few cans of sardines, the gleaming tin of which shone brightly through the water, we managed to pick up by diving. That was all.

Of course this disaster was regarded as a bad omen. The river spirits didn't want us to go through the rapids, that was plain. So we camped on the shore for three days waiting for a favorable omen that would permit us to resume our travels. When it came it was in the form of a wild boar that wandered happily into camp and obligingly stood still long enough for the boys to plant a dozen poisoned darts in his hide. The poison apparently packed him with sudden energy because he made a total wreck out of my personal bedding before he died in a slobbering heap on the tattered



remains of my only change of clothes. But was that a bad omen? No, those were white men's possessions as unfamiliar to the spirits as they were to the Dyaks, so they didn't count.

The area of flesh surrounding the darts was cut away, but that was the only waste so far as that hog was concerned. It was cooked and eaten on the spot. During the first part of the feast the meat was a little rare, but as the meal progressed and the fire had more and more time to do its work, the chunks hacked by *mandaus* out of the smoking pyre were increasingly well cooked until the last haunch to emerge was just about charcoal. It didn't seem to make much difference. Dyaks are not gourmets in the sense that their taste buds are sensitive to delicate culinary nuances. All they want is a bellyful, and the success of a meal is measured by their ability to move afterward. If they can't even wiggle, it was a total success. In this case, they couldn't even start a wiggle, though their belches assured me that they were at least alive.

Up to this point we had been on the river about a month, of which time fully twenty days had been spent in propitiating the spirits. Those were the tough days. As long as we were on the move I didn't mind a few festering insect bites, but trying to kill time in a mouldering hothouse while waiting for wholly imaginary omens to come to my rescue went against my Caucasian temperament. Wang Lo, too, showed a certain amount of impatience, but Achmed and his brother Malays could patiently sit out a wait for Halley's Comet. So could the Dyaks, though with them it was not so much a question of patience as of caution. In their



imagination, instilled with superstitions by generations and the grandfathers of generations, every minute was peopled with a thousand different malignant forms of spirit life, so they could spend their time anxiously concocting charms to preserve them through the fearful hours of black omens. If nothing was doing in camp, at least the spirit world was active enough to stave off boredom.

Aside from slowly going nuts, there was little I could do. If I had been a scientist I could have classified the flora and fauna, but the closest I ever came to science was to take some pictures. I can take pictures. So I took close-ups of all the plant life I came across. I shot stills and I took movies of everything that looked worthy of film. I wandered around in fern forests where it was so dark I couldn't see the black pools of water until I fell into them, and I climbed liana ladders up trees so high I had to wait until it was dark before I could get up nerve enough to come down. I tangled with poison vines so painfully irritating I felt as though I had been ignited after emerging from a turpentine bath, and once I stepped squarely on a python thirty feet long. That was one time I jumped so far in sheer fright I lost my way home. If the snake struck at me, it missed by a mile and probably is wandering aimlessly around the jungle to this day suffering from frustration.

I did make one startling scientific discovery which so far has failed to rock the field of ornithology, but its apathetic reception may in some measure be due to professional jealousy. I discovered the origin of the pheasant and the crow. Other ornithologists have made surmises, and some of them have even traced the evolution of the bones, but I



got it straight from a man whose ancestors had been there. This man, Taman Kila, the only Dyak to stick with me the whole trip, was sitting in the sun with me one day while we were waiting for a couple of favorable omens to come along. A pheasant flew by in all its flamboyant glory, but as an omen it was flying in the wrong direction to do us any good. A short time later a crow went by, likewise going in the wrong direction.

"He's going to admire his work," Taman Kila said, wagging his knife in the direction of the crow.

I agreed that that was probably where he was going and wondered why. Taman Kila told me.

Years ago, when Borneo was just shaking off the waters of the great flood, the spirits of a crow and a pheasant were sitting in the mud pretty much discouraged with their lot. Both of them were rusty brown birds of no particular beauty, but the pheasant was especially handicapped because of a general lack of brains. The crow, being by far the cleverer of the two, thought it would be much easier for them to make their way in this new world if they were more beautiful, basing his conclusion on the fact that the prettiest flowers attracted the most bees without doing any extra work.

The pheasant's spirit thought a long time about that, but in the end he decided the crow was right. But that was as far as he could get. Becoming beautiful looked about as hopeless as becoming the sun spirit. The crow spirit thought differently. He figured that brains could be called upon to remedy the inadequacies of their plumage and began to look around for ways and means.



In the jungle he found some sticky gum, some brilliant flowers, bright leaves, glistening gold, and fiery diamonds. On the shore of the river he found red plummy marsh grass and opalescent scraps of shell. "Now look," he said to the pheasant spirit, "I'll smear you with this gum and then arrange all these beautiful things on your back. Then you do the same for me and we'll be the most wonderful birds in the world and everybody will admire us."

The pheasant was thoroughly sold on the idea by this time. The flashing gewgaws were just the things to appeal to his tin-horn mind.

The crow spirit worked all day, and when he finished he had a work of art that is marveled at to this day. The pheasant was mighty proud, and resolved to do even better for the crow.

The next day he started in bright and early on the crow. He had enough brains to get the gum and this he smeared all over the crow from one end to the other. But then he couldn't get it off his hands. On the way back for a load of flowers and leaves he brushed against a burned out stump left from the great fire. His hands were all smeared with soot and charcoal. He tried to wipe the soot off but it only got worse. This befuddled him. When he picked a flower it turned black. In despair he went back to the crow to ask what to do next. The crow tried to help him, but being all gummed up himself, he couldn't do anything without getting stuck together.

At last the crow said: "Well, you wipe the gum off me, and then I'll pick the flowers so all you'll have to do is paste them on."



The pheasant started to wipe off the gum with his sooty hands, but the more he wiped, the blacker became the crow. The blacker the crow became, the more bewildered became the pheasant. The whole thing looked hopeless. At last he gave a futile shrug and wandered off.

"And so," Taman Kila concluded, "the crow is still black to this day, but very smart and the pheasant is very beautiful and very dumb. Every now and then the crow likes to follow the pheasants and remind them that they are beautiful because he made them so, and that is where that crow was going."

All my journey so far didn't really count. The country I was in had been visited before by other white men. The Dutch had accurate maps of the Mahakam Valley and much of the territory on either side. If anybody wanted to know anything about the country I was in, they could find all the information they wanted in books. Until I could get into the Apo-Kajan, the blackest part of Black Borneo, my trip hadn't begun. Not until then could I see things no white man had ever seen before, take pictures no other camera had ever taken, discover things no one else had ever dreamed about. Omens or no omens, I wanted to get to the Apo-Kajan.

I got there, too, but when I did my patience was as frayed as my pants. What made it worse was that I could display no impatience. At the slightest sign of irritation on my part, the Dyaks who were escorting me would fade into the jungle, and the drums would carry the story of my weakness up and down the river. The bones of many explorers have been fished out of the flesh pots of Borneo for no other



reason than that the possessor forgot to keep his tongue. Keep your tongue and save your head is a good rule to remember anywhere, but in Borneo they take it literally.

And then I saw the mountains. We had been traveling through canyons that were becoming increasingly higher with every mile, and the miles were becoming increasingly longer with every stroke of the paddle. The roar of water had been with us so long we took it for silence, and when we talked it was in high-pitched voices which we thought to be normal conversational tones. We rounded a bend and there were the peaks.



## CHAPTER 7: HAUNTED FOREST

WITH the exception of the Andes, I have seen most of the major mountain ranges of the world. There are peaks that, as you view them, go up and up and up until at last they reduce you to a state of awe in which mass and height lose all meaning. Your puny self becomes dwarfed by infinity, and your ego crawls down in the grass with the field mice. But such is not the case with the Apo-Kajan. Here is not magnitude to crush you, nor majesty to overwhelm you; here is a mystic escarpment of blinding white chalk that shimmers in the steam of the Rain Forest, a wall of poisonous beauty that grips your mind with a terrible fascination even while your instincts writhe in the urge to run away. Something lay beyond that wall, and whatever it was, it was evil.

On the map, the Apo-Kajan is shown to lie between the Bawoei Mountains and the Boeloengan Range. The two ranges almost completely enclose it, cutting it off from all contact with the outside world. It is a bowl of the forgotten past. The highest peak in the mountains surrounding it cannot be much more than five thousand feet, and the valley floor within is approximately fourteen hundred feet above



sea level. These estimates of altitude are based solely upon my experience as an aviator and are not to be considered as accurate. The mountains are of a slate formation, capped by a thick layer of chalk deposited when all of Borneo was at the bottom of a prehistoric sea. These chalk cliffs look like vertical edges of a vast glacier, but they radiate heat like the asbestos lining of a fire-wall.

Our approach to the Bawoei Mountains was by way of the Boh River, through the gorges of the foothills, from which we emerged suddenly upon a great savannah resembling a strip of African veldt, at the base of the range itself. Up to this point the river had been narrow and deep, but now that it had room to widen out it became shallow and strewn with rocks. Further navigation with canoes was impossible.

Strangely enough, this savannah had little jungle growth, the soil apparently being too shallow to support trees of any size. From where we camped we could see for miles across the prairie, and with my field glasses I could pick out most of the details in the mountains ahead. The slope was not steep, but the going looked tough. The range went up in irregular steps, and each step was choked with a furious tangle of jungle. It looked like a trail-cutting job from start to finish. Clouds were constantly massing over the peaks, dumping their tons of water and re-forming. That mountain wall was a regular rain factory. Above the trees, I couldn't actually see the steam, but I knew that under that solid mass of foliage it was there. The chalk cliffs, clearly visible, looked like the easiest part of the ascent. I could see plenty of crevices up which we could make our way.



There were caves, too, looking like black mouths in the faces of pale, chalky ghosts.

But right now we had to cross the savannah. No trees or rank creepers for us to slash through, but plenty of thorny shrubs and *alang-alang*, or tiger grass, to slash through us. Six foot high it stood, as crowded as wheat in a grain field, and each blade came equipped with a special set of self-sharpening band saws. We tried wading up the creek to avoid this murderous entanglement, but the sharp rocks under the water made it too dangerous. We could hike along with a scratched hide, but none of us could get far with a stone bruise on the heel.

Fortunately, we found after tearing our way through a few hundred yards of this, that the savannah was criss-crossed with game trails. Wild cattle had knocked down a swath through which we could march single file, and diminutive rhinos had trampled the path as firm as a road bed. It made nice going except that we never went anywhere. Those dumb animals seemed to make trails all over Borneo except in the direction in which we wanted to go.

I say "we" with some reservation. With the exception of Wang Lo, my Malays, and possibly Taman Kila, not a member of the crew wanted anything to do with the mountains ahead. From the first moment we glimpsed the chalk cliffs they were apprehensive. Every five minutes I would have to break up clusters of my Dyak carriers whose thoughts of home were carrying far more weight than their thoughts of work. And every time the game trail twisted around in the direction of their cached canoes they started back as though the prairie were on fire. To call them back



and cut through to a trail slanting off in the right direction was work that required more than vocal diplomacy.

A little variety was provided when a *lembu*, or wild bull, came down the trail we were going up. When he saw our lead boy he just lowered his head and started down the row. Wang Lo was second in line, and I saw him whip up his Eyemo camera to shoot.

I was last man in the long file, but the next thing I knew there was nothing between me and that bull but swirling air and Wang Lo's shirt on his horns. I added part of mine to the bull's collection and he went blasting down the trail in a cloud of dust and rags.

By some miracle the bull had charged the full length of our single file without touching a man. Wang Lo, as usual, was the worst off. The shirt that was his one and only garment was now a pennant on the wild bull's horns, and Wang Lo, as nude and yellow as a plucked chicken, was swallowing violently to get his heart back in place. His Eyemo was still in his hand, and he had a swelling lump over his eye where his head had banged the range-finder when the *lembu* ripped off his shirt.

"Velly good pictule," he assured me gravely when he could speak. "But actol, him bad."

Since "bad actor" was a mild understatement, I congratulated him on his survival and gave him hell for not catching me in my role of toreador flipping my shirttail in the *lembu's* face.

"Any good cameraman would have thought of the picture first and his skin afterward," I reminded him.



Wang Lo ruefully rubbed the lump on his eye. "Velly solly," he apologized.

Moved by a sudden suspicion, I picked up his camera. It held a hundred-foot reel, but the indicator was way past a hundred. The last winding, then, had been taken on thin air. I mercifully concealed the fact from Wang Lo, and quickly reloaded the camera on the spot. If he ever learned he had been shooting blanks while sacrificing his shirt, his mortification over loss of face would have produced a psychological depression worse than snake bite. He was a game one, that boy, and proud of his profession. To miss a picture was as grave a fault to him as to fumble a toss of loaded dice. The only difference was that I have never known him to fumble the dice.

The *lembu* that got away reminded me that we needed some fresh meat, so I sent Wang Lo back with Achmed to bring up the rear while I moved on ahead with Wirio, my gun boy. It wasn't long before we spotted a disturbance in the *alang-alang* ahead as if a small herd of tanks were following a trail converging upon our own. It looked like fair game, and I was all set to knock off some fresh meat when the Dyaks became aware of my intention. They melted. No noise, no fuss, no bother. They just left. It dawned upon me then that wild cattle have a bad habit of running the wrong way when frightened, and that the object of their fright is usually found embedded in a welter of hoof prints. I sat that one out.

After we pitched camp that night on the bank of the river a pariah *lembu* walked insolently into the water from the opposite shore. Wirio slipped the rifle into my hands



and I picked him off. It was a perfect between-the-eyes shot and it knocked him down on the spot. What happened next was almost unbelievable. The river, about two feet deep at that point, erupted in a cloud of spray and gravel. A terrific lunge brought the bull to his feet and he charged head down in my direction until a deep hole sent him floundering. Still he came on, but now he was lost. He swam in an erratic circle. As he turned broadside I fired a second shot into his right side that angled down and stopped his fighting heart. The volcano of fury erupted for the last time.

The only thing that saved me that time was the river. I examined the *lembu* carefully after it was triumphantly dragged ashore and with a twig probed the wound in its forehead. At three inches the twig struck the bullet, firmly planted in solid bone. A wound that would have killed four ordinary bulls wouldn't have proved even serious to this jungle tank. If he had been on dry land when the slug hit, he would have moved into camp like a hurricane. As it was, his first furious struggle had taken place under water, and with the snorting that went on below the surface there is no question in my mind but that he was half drowned and completely befuddled before he got his feet under him. So I survived my second brush with a *lembu*. In its way, that is something of a record. Hunters don't often survive two foolish brushes with those fighting brutes. The omens, my Dyaks explained, were favorable, and for once I was forced to agree that they had something there.

The *lembu*, about four and a half feet high, had a tremendous pair of shoulders and a short, thick neck to support a pair of wide, flat horns that measured three feet from



tip to tip. The horns almost met in a solid plate over the forehead. It was no false front the beast was carrying, even though behind the wide shoulders his body tapered off as lean and gaunt as the stern quarters of a greyhound. Muscles as hard and snarled as old rope knotted his bony haunches and furnished the driving power for a really brutal mass of animal. Turn a beast like that loose in a bull ring and the big job would come in repairing the hole in the wall left by his abrupt departure with the horse on his horns.

This *lembu's* yellowish-brown hide was not as sleek as it could have been. Huge black scars showed through his thin, short hair, evidence enough that when he played with other *lembus* it was not entirely in fun. A fresh wound in his shoulder must have been three inches deep, and the blow flies had converted it into a nursery for maggots. Ticks, too, had pitted his skin, and huge lumps on his back, each lump open and draining at the top, gave gruesome evidence that fifty or more of the pests were still at home. Fly bites, mosquito bites, a sort of fungus growth, and the mange further detracted from his appearance as a larder piece, but there was no denying the beast was healthy. Achmed spitted a tenderloin for me, and after an hour of patient turning over the coals it was still so tough I could only worry it a little with my teeth before swallowing. The Dyaks cremated their portions and hacked off chunks with their *mandaus*. When it developed that with their filed teeth and betel nut strengthened jaws they couldn't gnaw through a mouthful, they took what they could in their teeth and sawed off the rest just beyond their lips with their



*njoes*, or small knives. A convulsive swallow usually got the chunk down whole after that.

I think I slept a few winks that night, but if I did I was the only one. There were ghosts all over the place. Groups of men moved about uneasily and occasionally drifted down to the river to spit in the water. Spitting is the chief medium of spiritual appeasement. The reason, I discovered after months of patient inquiry, is based on the belief that the one thing a spirit cannot tolerate is neglect. It's as temperamental as a pampered beauty. Insults are preferable to no attention whatever. Now a man can say he was thinking about a spirit, but unless he gives actual proof of his thoughts the spirit has no way of checking up on him. Hence the spitting. It is a concrete demonstration of devotion. No spirit suddenly deluged with a shower of betel nut juice can claim neglect. So the men spent most of the night spitting in the river, because the river came from the region of the Apo-Kajan, the river had a spirit and knew all the other spirits in the mountains ahead. He would be a good spirit to have on their side.

In spite of the wholesale distribution of expectorate, the Dyaks had no assurance that their offerings were producing anything more than a dryness in the throat. They were traveling in a haunted world, and the very air was peopled with a thousand malignant devils. A sudden breath might engulf a spirit. An awkward step might crush one. Any man who stubbed a toe or stepped on a thorn immediately fell into a paroxysm of terror, convinced that he had offended the entire spirit world. The pain was proof enough that the ill-met sprite was striking back.



To make matters worse, a late moon came up and cast an eerie glow on the white façade of the chalk cliffs. Then even I could see the ominous circle of ghosts frowning down upon us, bidding us by their unyielding presence to turn back. Promontories became individual haunts, the valleys and fissures were only dark lines that separated one ghost from the next and the caves were black, gaping mouths. Silence, awe-inspiring and profound, settled down upon the veldt, and in that silence you could hear the hair of the men rustle as it stood on end.

Ghosts may be figments of the imagination, they may be subjects for speculation among psychic investigators, or they may be real. All I know is that in Borneo they are real and must be dealt with as real even when you know (or do you?) that they are hallucinations. A breath of air upon the cheek may be nothing more than a vagrant breeze produced by the sudden cooling of the ground after sunset, but if a Dyak believes it was a spectral touch, it is easier to regard it as such than waste your breath expounding the theories of heated air masses, adiabatic rates of cooling and the proximity of a dew point.

By dawn my boys were thoroughly sold on a quick trip home in spite of their bargain to take me over the divide and into the Apo-Kajan. I saw that move coming a long way off and was ready for it with a little bribery in which I had the enthusiastic co-operation of their head man. He was the recipient of three agate marbles, and should have been enthusiastic. For this munificent gift and my personal assurance that he could walk behind me and my gun, he agreed



to sacrifice his whole tribe, if necessary, to get me over the hump.

The rebellious faction muttered and mumbled around all during the morning meal. They weren't sullen or resentful of authority; they were just plain scared. Mostly they resembled small boys who had reached the gates of a cemetery and had suddenly discovered that the idea of a midnight ritual on a tombstone had lost its appeal. That was where the head man, or trail boss, came in.

The Dyaks on the trail have two immediate sources of advice concerning matters in the spirit world. One is the blowfly; the other is the cricket. We caught a blowfly first. What with the blood of the *lembu* still on the ground it was almost impossible not to catch one. The trail boss took it cautiously between his thumb and forefinger, with its head just sticking up above his fingernails. Then he stroked the head gently. If the head came off, it was no go. If the head stayed on and the blowfly wiggled it sideways after the stroking, it was still no go. But if he wiggled it up and down, it was a good sign that the spirits were with us. It is obvious that such a ritual gave the boss plenty of latitude in selecting his course of action. A little extra pressure in the stroking and off would come the head; a little blocking with the fingernail could prevent anything but a lateral movement and likewise, a slight manipulation of the thumb could prevent it from moving its head in any direction but up and down. The boss rubbed gently, thumbed artfully, and the answer was yes. To clinch the matter, the blowfly, when released, headed straight for the mountains. The trail boss had earned his marbles, the blowfly its liberty.



But just because the expedition had received the go-ahead from the blowfly, it didn't mean the Dyaks as individuals were to be favored by the spirits. Each man still felt the need for personal caution. According to their code, an expedition could still be successful if only one man returned, and one man was not a margin of safety conducive to personal peace of mind. We headed for the hills with what might euphemistically be termed discretion.

When we got there we really hit something.

It was like stepping into a slimy steam room clad only in a garment of leeches. Cool mountain breezes? The place was a reeking bath of poisonous vapor writhing through a dark green gloom in which light and air had decayed to feed the dripping moss. Everything drooped and dripped. Nothing seemed to go up; everything seemed to hang down. Waxy leaves, dragging masses of bearded moss, thread-like clusters of orchidaceous air roots, parasitic tree ferns, ropy tangles of lianas, all hung like torn wallpaper from a solid ceiling that was the single crown. In the murky rotting dusk the massive trunks that supported this upper stratum merged with the moss on the ground, and I, feeling infinitely small, crawled among the toadstools waiting for an inverted world to squish down around my ears.

This, then, is the Rain Forest of Borneo, on the southern slope of the Bawoei Mountains below the thunder factory that clings constantly to the bald dome of Batoetiban Peak. Above the solid blanket of foliage the supersaturated air can actually be seen carrying moisture higher and higher until it masses in solid white peaks of cumulo-nimbus clouds that suddenly blacken before your eyes and dump their



reservoirs of water like bursted balloons. Then it starts all over again. The whole process, from steam to cloud to cloudburst might take place within an hour, the sun working furiously between showers to reclaim the moisture lost by precipitation. I don't recall seeing any birds in this locale, but if there are any they must have webbed feathers.

While the evolution of a raindrop is playing continuous performances above the Rain Forest, there is no change whatever in conditions underneath the tree crowns. Storms come and go above, but beneath the crown it rains all the time, and it is perpetually so dark on the jungle floor it matters little if the sun outside is shining brightly or is lurking behind a black monsoon. Every leaf is a catch basin for the rain, and it drizzles its catch through with the annoying persistence of a leak in the roof. If the sun remains long enough to dry out the top leaves, there is still the moss, a vegetable reservoir capable of storing enough leakage to outlast a Texas drought. Moss grows and swells and soaks and reproduces on top of itself in a devouring cycle of destruction by suffocation. Trees are thickly coated with a decaying slime down which water constantly courses in greasy rivulets, and when you lean against the slime, your arm sinks in a foot, while water spurts between your fingers. Trees and vines only a few inches in diameter look to be several feet thick because of this heavy shroud of death. Underfoot the boggy carpet slips and skids and tears just when you need your footing most. Fallen trees moulder overnight and form great mossy mounds over which you must claw and scramble while a rotting smell steams up your nostrils and your body is plastered with slime. Once



on top of the mound you slip off on the other side and fall on your back with a spongy splash.

And the Rain Forest has another unpleasant side, too. Because of the tremendous heat and hundred per cent humidity, it has become the perfect incubator for poison in a thousand forms. Deadly snakes, spiders, insects and vitriolic vines breed there with a lavish contempt for the laws of survival. Leeches, ticks and mosquitoes reach a size so alarming that ordinary fowling pieces seem to offer inadequate protection, and leech removal resembles Saturday night in a slaughterhouse. The leeches are underfoot, they cling to trees, and they hang from leaves overhead. You step on them in your bare feet and they work up between your toes; you brush against a tree and they ooze underneath your belt, or you just walk along and they fall into your hair or drop down your neck from the limbs overhead. They are small to begin with, maybe only an inch or so long and as pliable as angle worms. Once they nip in and catch hold they start to swell until they reach a length of four inches and a diameter of nearly one. The Dyaks, being nude, sweaty and greasy, shed the leeches like water and if one does catch hold it is quickly detected; on the other hand my clothing offered a perfect catch-all for anything that dropped, and I have had as many as twenty blood-suckers on my body at one time. Then they had to be cut off with a knife, a gruesome, bloody operation no harder on the leeches than on me. The pasty gray thing, glutted with blood, was sliced off just below its head. The head itself remained in the incision it had cut in my skin for a few moments until death relaxed its suction grip.



Then it dropped painlessly off. A few drops of disinfectant usually cleansed the small wound, but if infection did set in, it could become highly dangerous. There have been times when my back looked like a dozen smallpox vaccinations, all working at once.

Snakes such as the *koele*, or panther snake, the *apoei*, or fire snake, and the *ata bla*, or red water snake were not so bad. They could at least be seen, and when your life depends upon seeing them you can generally detect them even when they are invisible. They are obvious dangers and can usually be avoided unless while avoiding one you bump into another. We never felt safe.

Always the way went up. Slipping in the moss, panting over fallen logs, struggling for air when there was only steam, worming among greasy tree trunks, we inched our way forward like a column of working ants. Each man carried his load on his back and a halo of gnats and flies around his head. His legs sank knee-deep in moss. There was no let-up. A pause for rest meant nothing when you couldn't get a breath of free air into your lungs. Once we crossed a small, crystal clear brook in which the water ran ice cold. We all threw down our packs and rolled in the refreshing bath. Out of curiosity I tested the temperature with my dark-room thermometer. The stuff that struck us as ice-cold registered a neat 85°F. Still, it did wonders to skins burned by poison vines and bites and chafed by sweat.

We camped at night with some misgiving. Of course we were drenched with water and sweat, with no respite from the moisture. A swamp was no wetter than the moss we had for a bed. Every time I turned my head I had to bail



out my ears. The ear that was to the ground might just as well have been over a spring, so liquid was the moss. The ear that turned to the jungle ceiling was just a funnel to catch the perpetual drippings from the leaves. A tent was useless. In that intensely humid atmosphere the moisture content of the air was enough to provide a private rain storm within the confines of the tent walls from the clouds that formed around the tent poles. Nor was there any way in which to protect yourself from the seepage underneath. A waterproof tarpaulin might repel ground moisture but it was a catch-basin for the drippings. The same could be said for a rubber blanket. Of course you could neatly solve the problem by rolling yourself up tightly in a rubber blanket so no water could get in from the top or bottom, but then you were sealed in a self-made steam bath, which within an hour would have you floating helplessly around in a lake of your own perspiration. No, in the Rain Forest it is well to abandon all hope of keeping dry, and just take the water as it comes.

At night, too, the leeches attacked in astounding numbers, feasting upon the Dyaks and myself with fine indiscrimination. In that pitch blackness I suppose they couldn't tell a dark skin from a light one. The thing that makes a night attack so insidious is that, since you are already so uncomfortable, your body reliving all the stings and bites of the day and enduring all the agonizing lumps under your bed, a few more minor nips pass unnoticed. The next thing you know a gross of bloodsuckers grown to tremendous size on your blood start pushing you out of bed because you are crowding them.



Such tortures as are mentioned above are real. There are others even more terrifying. The visible ghosts.

Invisible spirits will scare the hell out of a Dyak, leaving him half standing on clattering knees while his body relieves itself of unnecessary weight. Think, then, of the devastation to be wrought by the sight of a live ghost with two burning holes for eyes. I don't believe in them myself but it scared the hell out of me, too.

This particular ghost was the best I've ever seen. It started out a small wraith of mist that formed right in the center of the circle of moss and toadstools in which we were trying to sleep. Fifty men saw it at the same time, and you could feel the Great Fear that struck like a thunderbolt. It was a genuine ghost, and if it was composed of mist instead of ectoplasm, what Dyak was meteorologist enough to know that with a temperature of a hundred and a humidity of ninety-nine, a drop of one or two degrees in temperature would produce a visible form of moisture? Not my boys, that's a cinch.

The wraith moved gently with each vagrant breath. A sudden gasp of fright was enough to send it quivering eerily in a new direction, floating just a foot or so above the ground. Taman Kila, on my right, sighed and toppled against me. The trail boss, master of the spirit world, just stiffened out, so I figured he was gone, too. The ghost drifted on, and whenever its clammy presence passed over a prostrate Dyak there was a faint moan that seemed to be wrenched from a netherworld.

In petrified silence we watched as it drifted along on legs that tapered into nothing. It reached a clump of bamboo,



the black moss coating of which loomed in faint contrast to the blackness of the night itself. There was a concerted wail as it passed on through, leaving twisting fragments of itself clinging to the spikes. Up to this point the show had been good, but now the ghost proceeded to outdo itself.

Just beyond the bamboo thicket was a solid black mass I knew to be, having seen it in daylight, a three-story-high tangle of fallen, rotting teakwood mouldering under a shroud of moss. Here and there, I hurried to recall, great slabs of bark had decayed and fallen, tearing away sheets of moss that hung down like dead skin peeling away from a festering wound. In such places the exposed wet rot assumed a luminous quality due to its phosphorous content, but I had to do some tall reassuring to convince myself there was a solid, scientific reason for the two burning eyes staring at me through the head of my foggy wraith. Two phosphorescent knots of wood, their luminosity extra strong by contrast with the blackness of the night. That's all they were, and just because a chunk of fog happened to hover right over them was no reason for the mass fainting spell that knocked out my troop of boys and had me chattering a few chips from my own teeth. Like hell it wasn't!

I finally got up enough nerve to blast a clip of shots from my forty-five in that direction, and in spite of my shaking hand managed to knock off one of the eyes. The rest of the slugs just splashed into the wood as though they were hitting a sponge and did no good at all except that I felt much better listening to the noise. A fine thing for a grown man to be doing, sitting up in the middle of the night firing a



forty-five at ghosts in a dismal swamp, but there I was. Scared the devil out of a million mosquitoes though.

The shots did have a magic effect, however, that I hadn't counted upon. My boys all had their eyes closed before I started shooting, and the shooting didn't do anything to open them up. When the bravest or most curious of the lot did manage to pry his lids apart he took one glimpse in the direction of the spectral visitor and let out a shriek of hysterical gibberish. The rest looked and joined in the howling. I couldn't make it out, but the din seemed to lack something of the original terror.

It developed that the one-eyed monster I had created by the simple expedient of knocking out the other eye was none other than Bali Lunuk, a benevolent spirit of the highest order. Old Lunuk was rarely seen, but when he did put in an appearance only the best of omens could be expected in the future. Other wraiths formed and skulked about in the gloom, but they were lesser devils and went practically unnoticed in the presence of the major miracle. The fog drifted away from the glowing knot, but the effect remained until the gray light of dawn dimmed the sickly glow.

Dawn and breakfast. I opened a can of canned heat, enough to warm up a pot of coffee, but otherwise the meal was a pretty ghastly affair. Water in everything. Dried monkey meat that the Dyaks carried for their iron rations had swollen and turned white and green in the wet heat. Some of it had putrified well beyond the gamy stage, some was worse than that, and the best was scarcely fit for blow-flies, but the boys stood around with the water running down



their bare bodies and swallowed without chewing. Any maggots in the meat never had a chance.

On we went, the boys once more fearful as we got farther and farther away from the spot where Bali Lunuk had materialized. The old ghost might have been a good influence in his own territory, but now we were in the domain of other unknown and probably highly ferocious devils.

A crumbling slab of chalk that had once been a ghost on a cliff until its fall now became a ghost in the jungle. It was green with moss on one side, but on the other a layer had split off leaving a blank white face. My boys bolted at the sight like skittish mares confronted with a flapping flour sack. The only thing that held them together was the more overpowering fear of being caught alone. All I had to do was follow along in the path they had torn through the murk. Fortunately they had bolted up hill.

At the end of that spurt the boys were panting as though touched with asthma. Racking coughs overrode the wheezes, and when they coughed they could not regain their breaths. It was the damn moisture in the air, too much for heavy exertion. A hundred-yard dash up hill with full load was enough to bring a man down with a case of submersion. Treatment required artificial respiration and a dry towel, only there were no dry towels.

Even though I followed along at a far more leisurely pace than my ghost-plagued crew, my lungs served as little more than condensing chambers for the liquid air. I inhaled steam and spit out water.

For two days we were in that dreadful haunted forest,



and when we finally crawled like vermin out of the rank ferns to face the blinding glare of the chalk cliffs, my skin had steam-bleached to the pallid whiteness of a grubworm. This in spite of the fact that when we left the canoes my face was weather-beaten to the color of a brick smokehouse.

Those cliffs. Phoenix emerging from the fire would have crawled back in to cool off, if confronted with the reflected heat of those oven-baked walls. Moisture-laden air that steamed up from the jungle floor a hundred yards away hissed past on violent thermals, but there was no trace of humidity left in the air that puffed over the immediate face of the escarpment. It had all the searing aridity of desert air processed in a glass furnace.

We had been dripping wet when we crawled over the crumbling, greasy talus at the foot of the cliff. Wet chalk is soft, slimy and slippery, and doubly so when covered with a skin of moss. As the quantity of rubble increased the vegetation decreased, and as the vegetation decreased the sunlight burned through in increasing intensity. The last plant life to go was the moss. There was a hundred-foot margin of the thin stuff that lost its greenness as it crept upward until at last it was a dry brown fuzz that crackled underfoot. Then just white chalk.

We dried out about as fast as the moss. By the time the first Dyak scorched his foot on the bare chalk there was not a drop of perspiration to be seen in the crowd. Sweat on a naked brown back had about as much chance as a drop of water on a hot stove lid. My shirt dried out and became stiff as a board. My overlong hair that had clung damply to my



forehead baked in that position and stayed there. It responded to a comb with all the pliability of a wire brush. My boys had the same trouble.

The cliff wasn't high, not more than a hundred feet, but it looked about as passable during the day as a lava flow. At night it might be better. The chalk might not cool off, but at least the blow-torch kiss of the sun on the back of the neck would be absent. Wang Lo mechanically wiped his forehead, a gesture that was habitual in the Rain Forest, and the dry skin grated under his palm. He looked pained.

My suggestion that we retire to the shade of a fern clump down the slope and tackle the ascent after dark met with a howl of disapproval. Climb those haunted cliffs at night, crawl right over the face of a ghost? Right past the black, open mouths? Had I gone crazy? All a ghost would have to do was sneeze and we would all come crashing down. It would be an insult to the entire spirit world. We would cancel all our favorable omens. And not only that, but there was not a man in the crowd brave enough to remain within the enchanted circle of the chalk cliffs that looked so ghostly after dark. Better a thousand times to crawl over a living furnace than to endure eternity as a bit of ectoplasm in the maw of a demon.

So we had to go over in the full blast of a smeltering sun. The one path that offered a reasonable foothold was up an almost vertical chimney in the rock. It was a chimney, all right, and it must have been one of the main flues for the fires of hell. Choking dust dislodged by our feet was lifted into our faces by the draft. The sun hammered on our backs, reflected from one wall into our faces and from the



other two walls into our sides. A pig on a spit would have roasted perfectly in there without turning.

Five men went up first, howling like banshees as the pain of their seared flesh neared the limit of human endurance. Remember they were naked except for a belted loin-cloth. Hands that clawed for holds in the crumbling rock cringed when weight was applied, and the instinct of self-preservation that compelled them to hang on was dwarfed by the overwhelming desire to let go and escape the pain. When they had to brace their bare shoulders against the baked walls, pain reached exquisite proportions as I can testify, and then only a fierce, primitive stoicism kept them going up. They made it in twenty minutes, and ropes were immediately lowered to hoist up the duffle. That didn't take long either. The boys were in a hurry to get out of there before darkness hit and the evil spirits were free to leave the cliffs.

Wang Lo suffered most. His ridiculous shirt was short in tail, and every time his backside touched the wall his yowl notified his ancestors back to the twelfth generation that he was on the way.

While the boys were engaged in hoisting the luggage and each other over the cliff I walked over to one of the caverns opening up in the porous face of the cliff. It was eerily light inside, the sunlight reflecting from one wall to the other for a great distance. Weird stalactites and stalagmites (the teeth of the demon, the natives believed) threatened to engulf me at every step. Accidentally the butt of my pistol struck one and it rang like a bell. The heat inside was stifling and the air was dead. How far back into the mountain the cave ran I have no way of knowing, but it had the feeling



of going back a great distance. I have never had any desire to be an underground explorer, so I got out of there with some relief.

When it came my time to go up the ropes, it wasn't too bad. My canvas shoes that had been little more than soggy starting beds for mushrooms in the Rain Forest had dried out very crisply and they served to insulate my feet. Nor did I have to dig my hands into the hot rock where microscopic flakes of shell stood ready to knife into the bone. The dangling rope gave me a hand hold over the easier spots, and where the cliff bulged outward the boys hoisted me up by sheer man power. All I had to do was use my feet to keep my body away from the chalk. Even so my hands were cut and bleeding, my eyes puffed and red from chalk dust, my skin parched and cracking and my lips and tongue swollen until my mouth wouldn't close. That vertical stretch of equatorial desert which you could fall over in five seconds had all the punitive powers of the Sahara, and with no oasis in the middle.

Later I learned we were lucky. A party of Kenja-Dyaks returning over the cliffs had been hit by a rain storm when half way up. In my ascent I had been praying for such a storm to cool my tormented back and face, but the rain had had no such effect. It made a greased chute out of the chalk, and the steam that spit back when each drop hit was so full of choking spirits that two men lost their grips and fell to their deaths.

Well, we had enough trouble without borrowing somebody else's. Two months of slow baking on the river, two days of steam soaking in the Rain Forest and one afternoon



of frying on chalk cliffs had just about cooked our goose. Emaciated and heat stricken, our bodies a mass of open sores and infected bites, our feet and hands cut and bleeding, we could only stand at the top of the cliff and wonder how we were going to make the remaining hundred yards to the summit. My gun belt had chafed through the skin on my hip, and the sore, aggravated by perspiration and constant wetness, had spread halfway around my waist. Now the heat had dried and cracked it into such a painful condition I thought I was going to split in the middle. I took off the belt and hung it over my shoulder like a bandolier. Even then the weight of my light duck pants, mostly rags, was enough to drive me almost crazy.

All the boys were similarly marked with pack sores. Whether one carried a light rifle or a fifty-pound load, the weight of the article or pack had left its savage mark. Achmed and the Malays, all of whom carried rifles, had regular boils where the strap crossed the shoulder, and larger wounds marked the boys on porter duty. To make matters worse the damp leeches of the Rain Forest preferred to work under cover, and they had slid down to find sucker-holds underneath the packs where the skin was already worn tender. Constant shifting of the loads often crushed or dislodged the wormy things, but by that time the incision had been made and the infection started. Crushed leech did little to sterilize the wound.

So there we stood, a bunch of wrecks, while I scratched the vermin in my beard and wondered why I was crazy enough to fall for the exploring racket in the first place. For twenty-six years I had been an aviator. I had flown with



Blériot, with Anton Fokker, Van Meel and other pioneers of the air long before World War I. I had flown all through the last World War, had done some pioneering in commercial aviation myself, and had since flown nearly everything with wings. And here I was crawling around the jungle in a horrible condition, like some kind of second-class leech myself. I looked back and from my promontory could see the sheen of the Boh River where we had left the canoes three hellish days before. Gauging the distance as I would from a plane, I figured the flying time from the summit to the river at about fifteen minutes. And not a single chalk cliff, leech, blowfly, or moss patch in the whole damn sky.

Why, if I had an amphibian I could retrace the whole two months' trip in a day. I could hunt up my little bride in Bandjermasin, and still be back by morning without one single, solitary mosquito bite. For a quarter of a century I fly airplanes, and then just when I can really use one most I start out sliding on my can over moss heaps.

Still, I was seeing the country at first hand, and the country was seeing a lot of me. Even Wang Lo's shirt had more fabric left than my shirt and pants. But the Apo-Kajan was on the other side of the knoll. The land of mystery, enchantment, buried idols and the great unknown.

Last one over the hill gets caught by a spirit!



## CHAPTER 8: APO-KAJAN

THE HISTORY of the Apo-Kajan dates back to the early protozoa. For all I know, or anybody else knows, for that matter, that incredibly fertile bowl enclosed by the Bawoei and Boeloengan Mountains might be the very spot in which the first amoeba crawled out of the brine to start the long series of events which resulted in the establishment of the species *Homo sapiens*. It's as good a place as any. Certainly the facts show that the Kajan Valley sheltered a strangely advanced civilization long before the rest of mankind bothered about anything more than a full belly.

The Apo-Kajan, meaning the upper part of the Kajan River valley, is the heart and brain of Borneo. It was so ten thousand years ago; it is so today. The Kenja-Dyak dialect is the Oxford accent of Borneo; the Kenja fashions are the mode for the island; the Kenja homes are the best in the land, and the Kenja himself is the aristocrat of the tribes. Let no other Dyak forget that the Kenja man of Apo-Kajan is superior.

There is ample reason for the Kenja's claim to superiority. He alone of all Borneo is of unadulterated stock. No contact with the outside world has tainted the blood lines;



no foreign ideas have penetrated the aloof colonies of the upper river. In recent years Kenja-Dyaks have visited the coast and deigned to barter for metal goods and even cloth, but their attitude has not been cheapened by this contact with a commercialized world. They purchase only what they want and refuse to be lured into buying what the white man wants them to have. They buy but will not be sold; they come out of the jungle to deal, but the white man and the Chinese traders cannot come in to sell.

And when it comes to art, the Kenja-Dyak is in a class by himself, infinitely superior to the others. So delicate and exquisite is his work that the living model can be accused of being more careless of detail than the artistic reproduction. A bird just grows a feather and lets it go at that, but the Kenja craftsman, reproducing that feather, improves the lines and emphasizes the details.

All of which is well and good. The sorry fact remains that the twentieth-century Kenja has not advanced one whit over the boys loping around in the year One. If anything, he has receded a little. And I might add that the boys chasing through the swamps in the year One were not exactly masters of personal hygiene and the rudimentary comforts of domestic science.

I meant to prove all that on film, but first there remained the little difficulty of getting down into the valley from the summit. I thought the Rain Forest lay only on one side of the mountain and that the other side would be easy going. I was wrong on both counts. The drip-drip-drip began all over again, and the steam cloyed our throats. But, boy, we made time. This time we were going downhill, four feet at



a step and a hundred yards on a good skid. One slip on a slope and you rode the moss to the bottom along with any mouldering stumps or old logs that happened to block the way. One such greased chute dumped us in a cooling creek and thereafter we stayed in the water. The current was fast enough to sweep the bottom free of stones, and a soft silt in slack places made a comfortable oozy footing on which to walk. The advantage of this was that our feet became no more watersoaked than they would in the moss, and we could fall down once in a while and rinse off the chafing lather that encouraged the agonizing spread of prickly heat under the arms and between the legs. What exquisite relief! The cooling baths improved the atmosphere, too. Even in a jungle filled with the stench of decay the smell of fifty perspiring men, including myself, can become a nauseating thing.

We cleared the Rain Forest and entered the calm tranquillity of an ordinary jungle within the space of a few hours. Here was life and sunshine again. Birds of brilliant plumage, monkeys, wild boars, deer and a thousand other varieties of game. I relieved two boys of their packs and sent them on ahead to notify the rajah of *kampung* Oema Bem that we were coming. Now that my boys knew the worst was over they kept up a cheerful banter and were constantly puffing blowguns at anything that moved. The Rain Forest had wrought havoc with the light slender wooden tubes that formed their blowguns. Some were so warped it was nearly suicide to blow one. The sum total of the shooting was a hundred per cent waste of darts. Nothing fell down but this was to be expected even with straight



blowguns. Dyaks are great hunters, but they seldom get anything.

The Kajan country below the peaks is composed of gentle hills and wide level valleys through which meander streams on their way to the broad Kajan River, the main artery. The side streams, one of which we were following, have a disturbing habit of producing crocodiles at the most disconcerting places. Taman Kila, wading along in about ten inches of water, suddenly plopped into a deep hole. A lot of splashing went on as was natural, but when a croc came up instead of Taman Kila, every boy in the line bolted for the brush. They thought poor Kila had turned into a crocodile spirit. When Kila came up and skittered across the water like a surfboard with the croc in back of him they thought the croc had become Taman Kila. There was hell to pay getting those boys back even after Achmed polished off the monster with a load of slugs.

Ever after that Taman Kila was the crocodile-man, and his reputation went ahead of him all the way back to the coast. In one *kampong* two women not too shyly expressed a desire that he sire some offspring possessed of a spirit that would render them immune in crocodile-infested water. Dyak women have a tremendous horror of losing their kids to the huge reptiles, and Taman Kila looked like good insurance.

We were two days on the descent before we encountered the city limits of Oema Bem. The rajah, an agile old man named Boi Djalong, met us with every evidence of good will about a quarter of a mile back in the jungle from the junction of our nameless stream and the Kajan River.



"Do you need anything?" was his toothy greeting, while a dozen of his selected warriors shuffled around and scuffed their feet in the mould. They were grinning like a bunch of fiends, their black, file-sharpened teeth set behind bright red lips giving them the appearance of a circle of well-satisfied vampires whose blood feast had proved more than adequate.

"All we need," I said through Taman Kila, "is your friendship and a place to sleep."

"My friendship goes with you to the ends of the world, and grows brighter and brighter like the coming of day," the old bull thrower replied. He was a good egg with a stock of the tallest stories I have ever heard. None of this "Beg you to defile yourself by entering my humble home," stuff for him. Our visit was a big honor, to us. But he was glad to see us just the same, if for no other reason than that we furnished a new audience for his big ones.

Led by his warriors, who quickly let my boys know that they were inferior creatures from the Mahakam River, the rajah and I strolled along side by side, scratching our ribs on the narrow trail, but each unwilling to let the other walk ahead. Neither of us exactly said we were better than the other, but we certainly weren't admitting any inferiority. Behind Boi Djalong was all the prestige of hundreds of generations of direct descent from the first great rajah of all Borneo; behind me was my white skin and the authority of the Dutch Government. A lot of good it did us in the brush. Our men walked along in single file, free and unimpeded, while we stumbled along together on the narrow trail, getting ourselves all skinned up.





*Taman Kila.*

In water fighting his paddle was also his spear.





Dyak warriors.





This Dyak warrior is a picture of sartorial elegance.  
My borrowed rifle is an added flourish.





These Dyak boys of the Apo-Kajan are dressed to kill, but they hope they won't encounter anything fiercer than pheasants. Of course, should their quarry be asleep—



It was a good thing we reached the *ladangs*, or dry rice fields, when we did or the maintenance of our "face" would have cost us the rest of our hides.

Now came a delicate point in spiritual procedure. The rice was ripe and ready for harvesting; our boys were contaminated by the hundreds of strange spirits that had followed us over the mountain barricade from distant lands. If those spirits ever got loose in the ripe rice the harvest was as good as lost.

A number of suggestions were made by the rajah and myself while my boys stirred around uneasily and the rajah's warriors glared at them in sudden suspicion. At last Boi Djalong conceded my plan would work. We would march around the *ladangs*, follow the shore of the Kajan River to the *kampung*, and there we would march around the *belawang* pole. The magic of the pole would destroy all the evil spirits, after which we would return to the *ladangs*, walk around the other side and enter the *kampung* in grand style, free of bad omens.

The village, or city, of Oema Bem consists of a single row of houses set side by side extending nearly half a mile along the bank of the river. The *belawang* pole was in the center, just above the high water mark, and every Dyak, his wives, kids, chickens and dogs were there to watch us as we made that silly parade around the pole. They were somewhat apprehensive at first and waited with bated breath for some bad omen to break out when our first men reached the pole. When nothing happened they began to smile, and when the last man passed, completely purified, they began laughing, shouting and leaping about with wild abandon. Some of it



was excitement at seeing a group of strangers, but a great deal of it was relief that their *ladangs* would not be infected.

My boys felt better about it, too. If some rotten trophy had fallen off the *belawang* pole, or some *boekan* bird had made an unnecessary appearance before our purification, we could very easily have been in the delicate spot of losing our heads.

This business of making two entrances into a *kampung* is not without its drawbacks. The first time in, you can make it on enthusiasm and a certain amount of relief at getting out of the jungle. On the second swing around, however, the jungle doesn't look quite so bad, and certainly it smells a lot better than the town. As we skirted the *ladangs* on our ridiculous second and official entrance, I could smell the hot breath of the jungle as it panted over the rice, and it was true that it carried a definite trace of halitosis. But when we turned toward the *kampung* and the full blast of its sun-ripened atmosphere rocked me back on my heels, I wondered with a trace of nostalgia how my leeches, with blood of my blood, were making out in the Rain Forest.

Pushing into that smell was like bucking a strong head wind. You sort of leaned into it. It is only natural, I suppose, that a thousand-year-old city that is its own self-contained cesspool should get a little strong when a tropical sun maintains a constant high temperature for the most thorough fermentation; but natural or not, it is a crime against nature. It is a shame, too, because the *kampongs* are beautiful.

As I have mentioned, Oema Bem is laid out along the Kajan River, at this point nearly two hundred feet wide and flowing a soft brown current. Opposite the *kampung* the



jungle marches right down to the water, and in spite of its proximity to three hundred people, it is as wild and as untouched as any stretch of virgin timber within the confines of the mountains.

Though the *kampong* itself is half a mile long, it is not more than three hundred feet wide. Twenty feet of this is muddy shoreline where the canoes are beached. The next forty feet is a hard-packed slope that lifts the *kampong* about twenty feet above the high water mark. It is not a smooth, rolling slope by any means, but is cut up by hundreds of footpaths leading to the water, and these in turn have been enlarged by washouts to the proportion of small ravines. In back of the slope is the main street, probably a hundred feet in width. Aside from the usual scattering of one-seedling truck farms enclosed by the suicidal picket fences, there is not a blade of grass on the main stem. A few trees, too big to be cut down, cast an occasional black spot of shade along the street, and these jungle monarchs have been submitted to all manner of indignities by both dogs and men. Nor is their function limited exclusively to being arboreal comfort stations. They also serve as scratching posts, and their bark has been worn smooth at the bottom by pigs, higher up by kids, and still higher by the adults. The shade is not welcomed. The men prefer to loaf in the sun or, if that is too hot, on the airy verandahs that run the length of each long-house.

Fronting onto the street are the herb gardens, the stone piles, the personal *belawang* poles and the more durable family omens as well as the notched poles that lead up to the verandahs. The verandah is at least twenty-five feet



wide, the house is another thirty feet, and then, from forty to eighty feet in back of the house the jungle begins again, not gradually but at once. A strong monkey can make it from house to jungle and back again in one jump.

We entered the *kampong* from the north, and this time we could look around without fear of dooming a house by directing it to the attention of some evil spirit hitch hiking with us. There was no question about it, this *kampong* had the stuff.

The first long-house stood on stilts about fifteen feet high, and every single post supporting the joint was carved in the most exquisite bas-relief. The verandah rail, about three hundred feet long, was more intricately cut than the grillwork in a San Francisco chop suey house. Dragons, pheasants, tucans, snakes, pigs, and demons chased each other through convolutions of teakwood in a most elaborate manner. One post, hewn by a lascivious old craftsman, was undoubtedly the Dyaks' guide to what every young boy should know, and an interesting guide it was. No elementary course in love making, this, but a complete post-graduate curriculum ending with a degree of Paternity.

Boi Djalong was flattered by my remarks concerning the beauty of the first house. When I announced the second was an improvement on the first he actually beamed, and when the third proved even more elaborate, I had to strain my vocabulary to do it justice. I knew I would have to go easy after that because unless I could find suitable terms to describe Boi Djalong's house as the best in the world, I would find myself out in the cold. Jealousy of craftsmanship is no trivial thing between Dyaks. The rajah must necessarily



have the best, and the biggest insult you can hand him is to tell him his possessions do not measure up to those of somebody else.

Fortunately I did not have to resort to invention when Boi Djalong paused in front of his home. It was evident at once that Boi Djalong was not an impostor in this rajah business. He had the ancestry in back of him. The pile of *batu tuloi*, or ancestral rocks, in front of the house would have started a small quarry, while his herb garden would have stocked a patent medicine factory. The carvings on the posts under the house were more finely cut, the verandah more lavishly polished, the stair pole so deeply engraved anybody sliding down it would not forget the disaster for months.

It was not enough to put on a dumb act of admiration. I had to come out with the apple polish. "Boi Djalong," I said at last, "I thought the first house was wonderful, the second even more wonderful, but now I have seen yours I fear to stay here lest the sun that now goes to bed in the west suddenly decides to move in here. Only a house with such beautiful carvings is worthy of a great spirit like the sun."

Well, my nose was nearly twisted sideways by the odors as I said this, but it was worth the effort. Boi Djalong nearly fell on my neck at the size of my compliment, and no doubt he is still telling impressed visitors what I had said. "It is nothing," he said, "nothing but the best house in the Apo-Kajan. No one else has such a fine place, and you can stay in it with me."

Taman Kila translated this gravely, addressing the rajah



as The Greatest of Rajahs, and addressing me with the same ceremony as The Greatest and Whitest of White Men. In his role of interpreter Taman Kila was at his best, practically turning ventriloquist in his efforts to preserve the character and intonation of the respective speakers. When he was translating for me he grasped my double-barreled shotgun fiercely, swallowed the shrillness of his natural voice, puffed out his chest and tried to talk from his throat. When he interpreted for the rajah he grasped his *mandau*, assumed an imperious pose and rolled as haughty an Oxford accent as his fishmonger's argot would permit. He knew most of the dialects of Borneo, it is true, but the finer subtleties of each language were a little beyond him, and when the conversation entered a plane above trade talk his liberal translations were apt to prove a trifle shocking. For instance, when the rajah told me to make myself at home, Taman Kila generously included the rajah's wife and slave women, as well as a couple of daughters, in the offer. When I responded that I would be glad to accept the invitation, my stalwart aide informed the rajah that I would be glad to share his fleas. Achmed, who seldom deigned to speak the Dyak language though he could understand most of the dialects, tipped me off on Kila's generous treatment, and thereafter I was more cautious.

After we had paused long enough in admiration before the rajah's long-house, higher by fifteen feet and wider by thirty feet, than any of the others, we tackled the pole. Only Taman Kila, Wang Lo and the Malays were permitted to ascend, the lesser Dyaks of my crew not being qualified to be received in the company of a rajah. They remained in a



close knot out in the street, horribly aware of their inferiority in the presence of the mighty Kenja-Dyaks, and no doubt wishing they were home on the Mahakam where they could strut like men.

As usual Achmed and his fellow Malays were at my heels, their rifles slung across their shoulders. It was our policy whenever entering a strange *kampong* that we remain together in a tight, heavily armed group, just in case, and there was no reason for us to relax our watchfulness now. A slip of Taman Kila's tongue might plunge us all into a sudden maelstrom of outraged dignity, and then our guns might be enough to overawe our hosts without recourse to violence.

By this time I was sufficiently experienced in walking up poles to make the grade to the verandah without using my hands. I was quite proud of this accomplishment. It was one of those things to which no importance can be attached when successfully negotiated, but which can become so vitally important when you can't quite make it.

On the verandah was crowded half the population of Oema Bem. Boi Djalong marched over to the fire and seated himself imperiously on a gong. With rare courtesy he provided me with an up-ended section of a log to be used as a stool. Once he had visited the coast and seen that the *Tuan blanda*, or white man, sat on chairs instead of on the floor, and upon his return had chopped off a two foot length of log just in case he should some day play host to a man of such peculiar habits. It tickled him to death to have occasion to use it, and he was properly gratified when I commented upon his courtesy.



I took my place next to the rajah with Taman Kila facing us. We talked through him without glancing at each other, and you could see Kila swell with pride at thus being the center of such distinguished attention. The ring of villagers closed in tighter around us, practically stifling me with rancid odors. What with the heat of the day plus the heat of the fire, I had something to contend with.

Every word spoken was picked up by the eager listeners, critically analyzed and filed for future reference. How long were we on the way, did we see any orangutans, was it true that on the Mahakam River a rajah had a flag for his canoe longer than a paddle? Thousands of questions like these were asked and answered before the rajah decided it was time to eat. Up to this point no mention had been made of food or drink, it not being the Dyak custom to offer nourishment immediately upon the arrival of a guest. If a guest is welcome, the first question asked is, "Do you need anything to eat?" but since the polite answer is, "No," nothing is done about it until the regular meal time.

Upon the rajah's suggestion that supper might be in order, the crowd began to melt away, the kids rushing to their respective homes with great whoops of glee. They had been sternly repressed during the conference with their elders, and this was their first opportunity since our arrival to give vent to their normal exuberance. You would have thought they were just getting out of school.

My Dyaks, still clustered out in the street, were taken in hand by one of the rajah's slaves and led to a guest house down at the end of the *kampong* where they could cook their own food and sleep for the duration of their stay. A hostler



leading off a string of horses could not have shown more contempt for his charges than did this slave, himself a captive taken from an inferior *kampung* in Sarawak.

This habit of slave holding is peculiar to the Apo-Kajan. At certain times, when the supply of labor is growing short, the rajah will order a slave hunt upon some other *kampung*, maybe the next one up the river, but more probably upon some distant *kampung* outside of the Apo-Kajan, the inhabitants of which are regarded as inferior and hence suitable candidates for slavery. The strange thing is that these slaves make no effort to escape. They can even be sent upon errands to their home *kampung*, and will always return. It's *adat* again. The spirits have willed that they become slaves, and no self-respecting Dyak will go against the will of the spirits. On the other hand there is nothing about their servitude so bad that they are not willing to remain. They are treated as members of the family. They can marry other slaves, and the only restrictions upon their love-making is that any by-products automatically become the property of their owner.

I sat on the verandah and felt perfectly at home looking out over the river. Over my head was a cluster of skulls, some of which undoubtedly had at one time felt as much at home on the verandah as I did. Inside the lodge were more heads, but they didn't bother me. I leaned back on my log stool and looked around. The wall in back of me was made of one-inch strips of bamboo woven tightly together. Skilled artists had so painstakingly worked the walls into a brilliant mass of color that each single square inch of woven bamboo was in itself a miniature masterpiece. Most of the colors



were vegetable dyes made from flowers, roots and barks, but here and there mineral dyes could be detected. Also it was evident in some of the smaller articles scattered around on the verandah that aniline dyes from the coast were not unknown. Paddles, blowguns and the wooden scabbards for the ceremonial *mandaus* all showed brilliant traces of this modern importation. Eyes were the predominant figures. Walls may have ears in some places but in Borneo they have eyes. The walls have a spirit, paddles have a spirit, blowguns definitely have a spirit, and who is there to deny that a spirit must have eyes?

One article Boi Djalong had on the verandah was a drum, and it surpassed any other percussion instrument I have ever seen. It was half a jungle enclosed within the trunk of a single tree, and even after it had been carved into shape it was still more than five feet in diameter by twenty feet long. The two ends were solid, but the whole inside had been scooped out through a slit a foot wide that ran the length of the drum. An army of trained termites couldn't have done a better job. It must have taken years of patient work to disembowel that giant instrument a tiny chip at a time. I could see the Dyaks standing on the trunk, reaching through the slit to scrape a flake of ironwood from the bottom five feet away. Yet the inside was as smooth as if it had been polished with fine sandpaper. Two drum sticks leaned against the drum, each one larger and heavier than a baseball bat. It would take a strong man using both hands to beat out a fast number on that little item, but I have heard it done. Not just in the same *kampong*, either, but from as far as three miles away. At close quarters the first half a



dozen beats swung solidly just at the edge of the slit will stun the eardrums and after that it is one solid, continuous noise. From a distance the individual blows blend into each other, but the rhythm and pacing is detectable to the trained ear. It is drum talk on a tremendous scale, and the whole jungle system is linked together by these big drums. Every rajah has one of these *djetungs*, or giant drums, on his front verandah.

The gong the rajah had been sitting on was another interesting item. Generations ago the gong was used exclusively as a musical instrument, but now the round bowls, about two feet in diameter and shaped like a squat spittoon, are used mostly for sitting, and then only by those of high rank. In fact, the number of gongs kicking around a Dyak's home is an indication of his importance in the community just as surely as the number of *batu tulois* near his staircase. Most of them were of bronze, but some that had found their way in from Java and the Malay Peninsula were of brass.

The smell of broiling meat came to me through the open door and so I knew supper was about ready. I wandered inside, pausing to marvel at the beautiful bas-relief carvings on the door long enough to satisfy the rajah's vanity. It wasn't all an act on my part either. The door was a real work of art. A peacock pheasant carved as a central figure was lifelike enough to have laid an egg.

The door itself was about three feet wide by four feet high, and opened a couple of feet above the floor. It was hinged to the doorway by tight bindings of rattan that screeched frightfully when the door swung back and forth. Going in, you had to bend low and step high. An invader



entering in that position would automatically stick his neck out for a nice beheading stroke from a razor-sharp *mandau*. My own neck felt about a foot long when I thrust it into the gloomy interior even though my Malays were still on the verandah with loaded rifles.

The interior of a Dyak rajah's long-house is no palace except maybe for the fleas. The first thing I stepped on in the darkness was a small pig, and it went squealing off in the gloom until it fell through a hole in the floor. Then it squealed louder than ever. It was a lesson, though. After that I never put my weight on my feet until I knew what my feet were on, and until I knew they were on something. The flooring was not the best in the world. It was solid enough, being made of teakwood planks ranging anywhere from three to eight inches in thickness, depending upon how the log split. The logs were worked smooth with an adze to eliminate splinters, a necessity where everyone went barefoot, but no attempt was made to fit them together side by side or to level them off across the top. Pacing the floor in the darkness was like walking the ties of a second-class railroad. Such an arrangement did, however, simplify housecleaning. Dirt that collected on the floor sooner or later fell through the cracks to the ground fifteen feet below.

The arrangement of the room was completely functional. Right beside the door was a small closet about three feet square in which the rajah kept his war costume. In the event of a raid he could jump out of bed, rush for the door and on his way out grab his headdress, fighting *mandau*, spear and all the charms he needed for spiritual protection. Every



Dyak warrior has such a closet, and no fireman can respond to an alarm more quickly than he.

The fireplace was against the back wall. A thick layer of clay formed the flooring and an opening above it the chimney, though chimney is pretty much of a courtesy title. Actually the narrow slit offers no draft whatever, and such smoke as does escape, does so purely by accident. Most of the smoke simply drifts into the room and eventually filters through the thatched roof. This has two major advantages. The narrowness of the slit serves to keep out most of the rain during a torrential downpour, and this is important in a land where one has the devil's own time starting a fire with wet wood and no matches. The second advantage is even more important. The more smoke that pours into the room, the fewer the mosquitoes, and the more smoke that penetrates the thatch, the fewer the insects that will dwell there. A new and unseasoned house is a veritable hive of pests, while one that has been smoked to the color of a well-ripened ham is almost free of them.

In front of the fireplace was an earthen platform several feet square that served a triple purpose. It caught the sparks that popped from the fireplace, it served as the kitchen, and at night became the bedroom. The heat of the fire warmed the earth and made a comfortable if slightly greasy bed. The grease is more evident if the dirt platform has been used for dressing down a hog carcass during the day. The grease does help to settle the dust, however, though the smell is something you have to beat down with a club before going to bed.

Suspended from the rafters over the fireplace were all



the herbs, spices, dried meats, sacks of rice and bags of sago flour. Bowls of water and a collection of pots and pans were lumped together at one end of the fireplace. On a shelf above the fireplace were more gongs, placed there when the householder is rich enough to possess them. Otherwise this shelf becomes a jungle whatnot, containing everything from bowls of poison for the darts to moth-eaten skulls picked up second hand. Skulls taken honorably from ambush or in actual combat are suspended from the ridgepole in conspicuous places of honor, but heads that are still hanging around long after the events leading up to their decapitation are forgotten, are relegated to the shelf or to positions out on the verandah where atmospheric conditions hurry them along on their way to limbo.

Boi Djalong must have had a dozen heads out on the verandah, a dozen more hanging in gruesome clusters from the ridgepole, and several more just kicking around for the kids to play with.

Boi Djalong had four sons, two daughters, two wives and several slaves. Each of these in turn had a dog or two, and the slaves were at present engaged in rearing by hand a litter of five wild baby pigs captured during a hunt. Two monkeys, a fighting cock and a dozen chickens completed the household. All occupied the main room. Sometimes it looked a little crowded, but after a few nights without sleep you can sleep through it.

Mealtime was a help-yourself proposition. Fingers were the main utensils, though if you were fussy you could pile your food on a palm leaf and slide it into your mouth from that. The rajah served himself first, hacking off a section of



barbecued pig from the carcass in the fireplace, scooping out a palm leaf full of rice from the pot at the edge of the fire, and then daintily stuffing himself, while reverberant belches sounded his approval. I followed him, the family came next, and then the slaves. Taman Kila, as interpreter, rated with the family, but poor Wang Lo, having no official status in the domestic circle, had to grab while the grabbing was good. I noticed, however, that he was in no danger of starving to death.

After supper Boi Djalong had some smoky flares of which he was quite proud lighted in my honor, so I didn't have the heart to outdo him by lighting my gasoline storm lantern. The flares were reserved for state occasions, it being the usual habit to fall into a stupor directly after eating, thus cutting down on the cost of household illumination. The flares were made of coconut and bark fiber soaked in a long-burning and foul-smelling resin that scattered far more soot than it did light, but as long as the flares made Boi Djalong happy I was satisfied.

The women shuffled around with bundles of bamboo splinters about the size of hat pins which they proceeded to hang over the various openings into the room. Several were suspended on rattan strings in the doorway, some were thrust into openings in the woven walls and some were hung from the shelf, the general idea being that any spirits attempting to invade the room would impale themselves on the splinters in the darkness. Over in the far corner of the room was a circular opening in the floor which required a special method of defense. This was the ladies' room, or the men's room, depending upon the exigencies of the situa-



tion, and under certain circumstances a barricade of sharp darts over the hole could prove painfully embarrassing. In the interest of safety the darts were hung below floor level.

The rajah and I had a lot to talk over that evening, but Taman Kila had had a hard day. Along about the third long and involved lie Boi Djalong was telling me, Taman Kila became bored and went to sleep. That left us both tongue-tied. Boi Djalong looked at me for a while, I looked at him, and then we just toppled over where we sat and went to sleep. The women padded around awhile, the dogs came over and sniffed moistly, a piglet snuggled up to me for warmth, and then silence settled over the *kampong*. The only things still active were the fleas.



## CHAPTER 9: DYAK LIFE

CEREMONIES, festivals, dances, religious demonstrations and feasts are generally conceded by the exploring fraternity to be the index to a tribe's habits. It is true that such occasions are colorful, barbaric and spectacular. Some are even frightful. But to me the true spirit of a race is revealed by the manner in which it gets up in the morning. It is only in the ghastly dawn that all pretense is shed. Hypocrisy, false glamour and bizarre customs fall before the painful need of getting up to face another sunrise. I have yet to find a race that can do it gracefully. A banker staggering out of linen sheets in a New York penthouse, or a Dyak miserably assembling his creaking joints in a long-house—one is just as horribly disillusioning as the other.

I still shudder when I recall my first awakening in the long-house of Boi Djalong. There was the smell of Boi Djalong, groaning in his sleep, on one side of me, and the smell of his wife sleeping on the other side. And there was the film of smoke from the dying fire that spread in thin layers across the room, shining in gray patches where the sunlight streaked through cracks and interstices in the wall. It was cold and damp. I shivered, and a pig and two dogs



wriggled against my stomach in protest. The shiver painfully reminded me that the human body, while it may be a single piece, is composed of innumerable separate joints, each one of which had to be wooed back into place as gently as possible. I started assembling myself there in the dirt of the hearth. Boi Djalong woke up and stared at me stupidly through a thick mass of hair that had fallen over his ugly face. His file-sharpened black teeth snarled at me through the hairy matting in a revolting grin. His wife whimpered and climbed to her feet while her knees cracked. The dirt from the floor was in her hair. She staggered weakly in a circle and made her way over to the hole in the floor. When she came back she held a handful of bamboo splinters that had protected us from evil spirits during the night. She made a round of the room collecting the rest of the splinters. Then she went over and began prodding aimlessly at the fire. Boi Djalong and I got up and stretched at each other.

Soon the room was full of smoke. Taman Kila and Wang Lo woke up but couldn't rise. They had slept on the uneven floor, away from the fireplace, and their spines were corrugated. Their eyes were bleary with sleep, and tormented by a lack of comfortable rest. I felt the need myself of washing my face and shaving my messy stubble of beard, but I knew better than to tackle the verandah pole at this early hour to go to the river. Even a trained gymnast needs a few warming up exercises before he attempts his more spectacular accomplishments such as scaling a notched pole. I needed a lot more than that.

Rice was scorching in one of the dirty pots, and a few ribs of burnt meat were sizzling on the revived fire. Breakfast



was on the way. Boi Djalong wandered over and dug out a handful of bleak rice which he stuffed into his mouth and swallowed. It burned his hand so he wiped his fingers on his rump. Then he finished off a barbecued rib. Down at the end of the *kampong* my boys had my canned goods, including some excellent coffee. My mouth watered at the thought of it, but I was stuck there with the grisly remains of mystery meat. Any other course would have offended the rajah, and when living in such royal company, I had to do as royalty did. I ate, my jaws moving like wooden levers in response to some motive power other than my own. I was lucky to find a charred sweet potato in the ashes that had escaped attention the night before. It was slightly overdone, being mostly cinder, but at least it was better than the mystery meat. A mouthful of brackish water in a gourd helped get the stuff down. The bacteria count of the drinking water was high enough to start a whole colony of typhoid and dysentery bugs in my intestinal tract, but at least it was liquid. I have encountered water so packed with bacteria it was ready to jell.

Strangely enough, I began to feel better. Even Taman Kila and Wang Lo seemed to take heart when they discovered they were going to live after all. They creaked and groaned while their bones made odd snapping noises but at last they got straightened out and some food into their stomachs. We wandered out onto the verandah where the sun could lend a hand at taking the moisture out of our joints. It was nice out in the sun, sort of like sitting on the sunny side of a barn with the warm odors of the barnyard enveloping you.



The *kampong* was beginning to perk up and lose some of its ghastly post-dawn chill. Kids moped around the street in vacant indecision, not yet awake enough to determine what kind of hell to raise next. Men and women wandered in the direction of the *ladangs*, but there was nothing purposeful in their strides. A small cluster stood outside the guest house in which my boys were quartered waiting for a glimpse of the strangers. A few more stood outside our verandah, gaping up at us. Anything for an excuse to get out of going to work.

I was sitting on my log, looking at nothing in particular when something struck me as odd about the rajah's gong. After asking his permission, I picked it up for closer examination. It seemed to weigh a ton. Curious figures were discernible beneath its polished coating of grime, but my main concern was now the weight of the gong. I moistened my finger and rubbed. The dirt came away in rolls, revealing a dull golden luster. Surreptitiously I scratched with my knife. A thin line emerged, a brilliant metallic line that could come from nothing but solid gold.

I worked Taman Kila overtime questioning the rajah on the source of the gong, but its history was so old he could only surmise. On one point he was positive. The gong was of local manufacture, and the gold that had gone into it was from the Kajan River region. The rajah gestured toward the hills when I tried to pin him down on the exact location. It had been so long since the Dyaks had done their own mining and smelting that he had no idea of the source of the gold himself.

At one time the Dyaks had their own iron and gold mines,



smelters and forges, but in the last fifty years they have found it much easier to trade with the white man on the coast, or to trade with the coastal tribes who in turn trade with the whites. Once they had fashioned durable *mandaus*, knives, adzes and axes of their own iron. Now all that is left are the ruins of the forges and a few samples of their work. The jungle has reclaimed the mines.

When at last my breakfast had digested to the point where it was no longer a solid lump of lead in my stomach I told Wang Lo to dig out the cameras and we would start to work. It was a perfect day for photography. A bright, clear sky, a few shapely white clouds and no haze. With a red filter I could get some pretty dramatic shots around the *kampong*, and I needed something like that. A dense, steamy jungle haze had always foiled my efforts in all previous *kampongs* we had visited.

We didn't know it at the time, but the day was to become something of a red-letter day in the matter of sex. Whatever the shortcomings of Boi Djalong's tribe, they were all there when it came to libido. Kids ten and twelve years old demonstrated all the precociousness of a flock of goats. Their lascivious elders encouraged promiscuousness by example even while giving the kids the devil for doing likewise. In one day in Oema Bem we encountered more license than a blue-nosed vice investigator could uncover in Port Said in a week. In fact we observed the complete cycle of Dyak domestic relations by the simple expedient of walking from one end of the *kampong* to the other. We couldn't help it. We not only saw it; we had to walk around it.

Sex is, to put it mildly, uninhibited. For this very reason



the affairs of the heart come easily and vanish the same way. Promiscuity is the accepted form of behavior, and hence it is not promiscuous. Just the same, to a white man first confronted with what amounts to a moral laxness, the general abandon of a Dyak in love is a little revolting. You have to grow into it, as the Dyak does.

It is all perfectly natural. Up to the age of ten boys and girls are regarded as a sort of neuter gender and no attempt is made to separate the sexes. Little girls are not trained to help their mothers, nor are little boys taught to ape their fathers. They just have one fine time raising hell and gratifying their curiosity on any obscure subjects that might come to mind. They are superstitious, yes, but because of their age they are not seriously punished for disobeying some of the *adats*. They regard spirits with awe but do not feel bound to respect all the rules for appeasing the unseen ones. Family discipline is strict; no child would think of talking back to its parents, but on the other hand the parents are lenient about unimportant details. They don't boss the kids for the sake of being boss, a fault all too common among white parents.

After the age of ten a sharp change is apparent. Girls are called in to help their mothers winnow the rice and collect the spices, to help with the house cleaning and to learn to make cloth out of *kapoewa*, or tree-bark. Weaving is becoming a lost art, though some isolated tribes still practice it. Boys go into the fields with their fathers where they do more damage than they do good, but at the same time they learn the importance of cultivation and the necessity of scaring birds and monkeys away from the ripe grain.



A curious thing happens at this stage of a child's progress. Up to the time a boy is old enough to go to the fields he regards girls with a mild contempt, but the instant it is apparent that the ways of male and female are to be separate he begins to regard his former companions with tremendous curiosity. He is a man of the fields and the game trails; the girl is a helpless creature of the household. An inferior creature, of course, but nonetheless one to be protected and even cherished. By the time a boy and a girl reach the age of twelve they are regarded as having come of age. From then on life is an adult hell, with spirits governing every move, and parents rigidly enforcing such details as the spirits have neglected.

It is at this age that the tattooing begins. The first symbol a boy acquires is a star or some other equally simple design on his shoulder. He bears the pain stoically; the business of smearing the skin with dye and then pricking it beneath the surface is not a tender caress. Often the little braggarts will demonstrate that tattooing is not painful at all by taking a small piece of rosin, laying it on the skin of the arm or chest, and lighting it. The rosin burns right down to the skin, leaving a terrible wound and resulting in a horrible scar. The more such scars a boy can sport, the greater his demonstrated fortitude. The tattooed star indicating his achievement of puberty is followed by other symbols of more advanced attainments. Trips to distant *kam-pongs* are suitably inscribed on his chest much as a white man pastes travel labels on his suitcase. Successful encounters with wild bulls, head-hunts, spiritual advancement, etc., are all duly engraved. The idea is that when he reaches the



end of his rope and enters the spirit world, the man's biography will be on his spiritual skin and a place will be reserved without dispute for a person of his accomplishments.

It is at this age also that the youngsters have their teeth filed. Some tribes file them front and back to form a cutting edge as sharp as a knife; others file them to points like fangs. For this particular form of torture a regular file is used today, and the process is so painful my own teeth ached for days just from watching the operation. The men who do the filing are not exactly trained dentists, and every time the file slips the roof of the mouth or the lips are gouged in bloody furrows. The victims usually undergo the agony with stoicism, though a few yelps now and then are pardonable, especially when the file slips.

As soon as the teeth are filed it is permissible to chew betel nut. This gives the teeth a black luster regarded as highly desirable. And that completes the unofficial introduction to manhood. A tattooed chest, filed teeth and a cud of betel nut make the man. After that the boy is privileged to make his conquests where he may.

The boy's first introduction to sex usually takes place in the fields where he is sent to chase away birds. In his eyes, and in the eyes of the girls with whom he has previously played, this is a post of tremendous trust. He sits out there importantly and the little girls come out to admire him. What follows is regarded as perfectly right and natural.

It is not long before such casual trysts seem lacking in the dignity required of a person of his position. Love loses caste without the proper setting and formality. In imitation of



his elders, he builds a tiny hut, no larger than a dog house, and in this he and the girl of his purely temporary choice play in earnest at keeping house. In adjoining fields other small boys are doing likewise, and the competition for the best house is just as keen amongst them as it is amongst their parents in the *kampong*. As an additional tribute to his love, the boy will carve a small pole with symbols of his devotion and erect it before the hut. Every time he changes girl friends he erects another totem pole.

If it happens that the fields are a long way from the *kampong* and there are hostile tribes in the vicinity, the boys co-operate in their love-making. Two or three will stand watch for their companion while he retires to his hut with his girl companion. This also holds when parents are conspiring against the lovers. No adult can approach within a quarter of a mile of the couple without some little codger spotting him and sounding the warning. Then the girl slips like an eel through the rice in one direction while her lover heads for the tall timber.

In spite of all this prenuptial free love, there is never any dispute about a girl's claim to virginity when the time comes for her to wed. The reasoning is simple. Since there are no virgins, all girls are equally chaste, and if they are all equally chaste then they must be virgins. Nobody is fooled and everybody is happy. A remarkable and highly satisfactory state of affairs.

As the years go by the boy carves more and more totem poles until at last it becomes apparent that he has paid tribute to just about every unattached damsel in the tribe. Thus he is in an excellent position to tell just which one suits



his fancy most. He begins to consider matrimony seriously. And matrimony is something that has to be considered seriously. In contrast to his free and easy life as a bachelor, the married man steps up to his neck in *adats*. Unfortunately, marriage in itself is an *adat*, and it is very rarely that you find a Dyak boy of twenty-three or twenty-four or a Dyak maiden of eighteen or nineteen who is not married.

Unless the boy is of royal birth, the marriage ceremony is simplicity itself. A festive banquet and it is all over. The boy's doom is sealed. Thereafter he moves in with his in-laws and for the next two to four years is regarded as little better than a slave. It is not often that the newly married Dyak rates a place near the fire. He and his bride have to make out as best they can in the cold, and when the nights are raw and wet, love is about the only warmth he depends upon to keep the misery out of his joints. Conditions being what they are, love is not always enough.

After his period of domestic apprenticeship is over, the groom may, if he can afford it, build an apartment of his own down at the end of the long-house and set up house-keeping as an independent, or he can dispossess an aunt or uncle and move in next to his father-in-law. At the end of two years, however, he usually has a couple of squalling dependents himself.

Dyaks invariably keep to their own class when marrying, and class distinction is rigidly enforced. If a boy marries above his station, his bride's family loses face, and it is a rare father indeed who will obligingly sacrifice his prestige for the sake of his daughter's love affairs. "Play around with him all you want, baby, but for heaven's sake, don't



marry him," is the usual parental advice under such circumstances. On the other hand, if a boy marries below his station, his own father suffers. Filial gratitude being what it is, a son will often take a bride of lower social station if she has the physical attributes to compensate for loss of class, but parental discipline being what it is, he won't if the old man can prevent it. It sometimes happens that a boy will marry the daughter of one of the slaves. In this case any progeny resulting from such a union will still be regarded as part slave. What is worse, the children are not the father's slaves, but are the property of the head of the clan, as is the case with all children of slaves.

So closely knit are the families within a single *kampong* that it is almost unheard of for a boy to marry outside his tribe. Even when *kampongs* are only a couple of miles apart, there is little social intercourse between the two. Warriors may make diplomatic visits from time to time, or trading units may engage in a little bartering, but so brief are the visits that an impressionable youth has little opportunity to pursue his love affairs beyond the ogling stage. Then, too, there is always the dampening prospect that should he be successful in luring a likely maiden beyond the rim of her *kampong*, he would likewise be carrying his own head beyond the reach of immediate rescue should he encounter an ambush. Head-hunting is all too prevalent, and the boy who loses his head to a strange girl is also apt to lose it to her boy friend. In fact the girl might co-operate with her warrior boy friends to accomplish just such a result.

Marriages contracted with members of the rajah's family, a chief's family, or with the daughters of any of the



prominent tribal leaders is something else again. Such a union calls for swank. On the day of the wedding the bride's house is crammed with bright foliage, flowers, knick-knacks, presents, and small ornaments or trade goods. The house looks like a Christmas tree. All the regular family possessions are removed to places of safe keeping.

The bride herself is the most magnificent ornament in the place. Her sleek, lithe body has been bathed and oiled until the tattoo marks gleam as if freshly painted. Her hair has been oiled and combed until each strand has become a separate contribution to her beauty. Slaves or her girl friends pluck her eyebrows with bamboo or brass tweezers and polish her nails in approved Oriental fashion.

A velvet sarong imported from the coast for just such occasions is wound around her waist with appropriate giggles. Spangles, beads and bright threads are an important part of the sarong, and no royal maiden would consider her wedding complete without half a bushel of beads in her necklaces. Her feet are bare but her legs are decked with anklets and metal bands. Her arms, too, are weighted down with bracelets. An elaborate headdress and a pound of earrings complete the costume. No bodice is worn, it being agreed that no artificial costuming could equal the beauty of her bare breasts.

The groom arrives shortly after noon bearing painful evidences of a thorough scrubbing and oiling. His hair, too, has been dressed, and drenched with rancid coconut oil which stinks enough to overcome any body odors which might be left after his bath and scraping. He wears a thirty-foot loincloth and his war *mandau* and that is all. Heavily



muscled, beautifully proportioned and smilingly handsome, he is a figure of sheer animal virility one is not likely to forget once seen.

With the groom comes his family and his ushers, selected from among his male companions. They take over the bride's house, and they really take it over. The rajah, or dignitary, feeling very unimportant for the first time in years, is absent-mindedly shoved into some corner while everyone pauses to gape at the bride and groom who stand self-consciously on the verandah. That is the ceremony. After that the riot is on. The ushers go for the presents hanging on the walls. The bride's friends go for the decorations. In short order the whole house is stripped to the beams, and if these weren't securely lashed they would vanish, too. There have been times when the whole house has been torn down in an excess of enthusiasm. Strangely enough, it is not the bride's father who protests the wholesale destruction. It is the groom. As the new addition to his father-in-law's working force, it is his job to clean up after the wedding, a job of no small proportions when one to two hundred celebrants full of *djenei*, or sticky rice, broiled pig, *djakan*, or sweet wine, and a childlike zest for destruction really set out to take the joint apart.

The groom aspiring to the hand of the princess must be prepared to present his father-in-law with a handsome gift. An intricately carved *mandau* is the favorite present, although along the coast where Dutch guilders are the medium of exchange, a cash deposit is the preferred thing. On a cash basis, a rajah's daughter's value might reach three hundred dollars. Up in the Apo-Kajan, far from the taint



of commercialism, craftsmanship counts more than cash, but just the same, the gift of an elaborate *mandau* usually bankrupts the groom for some time to come. Steel for the shaft and ivory for the handle are commodities not conjured up overnight by a Dyak Romeo in the heart of the jungle.

Though there is no actual ceremony at the wedding, there are a few other technical details that must be observed before the marriage can be consummated. Only *adat* can account for them. For instance, the groom must give his bride a string for her waist on which are strung four beads of great antiquity. This belt, known as the *taksa hawa*, is handed down from generation to generation, but no one knows why. At the wedding supper, the bride finds two more such beads in her rice, and before the day is over the groom must give her one more large bead known as the *koho goe-man*. At the same time the groom's family and his friends give the bride a string of beads as long as she is tall. There is considerable pomp and ceremony attached to the bead gifts, indicating that in the past they must have been symbols of great significance. There are many theories concerning the beads, including the ever-present one of phallic symbolism, but it is my opinion that they are a survival of the ancient custom of decking the bride in precious gems. Borneo is incredibly rich in diamonds, and along the coast in pearls, and there is plenty of evidence that the ancients were familiar with the art of jewel cutting. Like weaving and metal forging, it is a lost art, but the *adat* remains. Instead of diamonds and pearls, they now use beads, but as



far as the bride is concerned she is perfectly satisfied. After all, what she really wants is the man.

It is after the wedding that the trouble really begins. The groom has been used to unlimited freedom. The bride has been accustomed to free love, unlimited admiration, and only a minor amount of family drudgery. Of course, if she has had a child or two before her marriage, she is a little better trained in the matter of child welfare but not much. Love children are regarded as the gifts of the spirits, and it is seldom that any attempt is made to seek out the father for a blowgun marriage. Such children are taken into the girl's family as a matter of course. There is no discrimination against the little bastards. They take their place in the family circle more as the brother or sister of the girl-mother, and the head of the family regards them as his children rather than his grandchildren. Upon maturity they have the same rights as the more or less legitimate children.

About two weeks after the wedding the groom begins to chafe at working for his in-laws. The bride recalls all her previous lovers and begins to compare their ardor with that of her work-weary husband. Her position in life has not improved. She still has to work for her mother; she still has to stay in the same old house; she has the extra work entailed by the adoption of a husband; and she can no longer go slipping through the *ladangs* for secret love trysts after dark. All the gay swimming parties, boat rides, fish bakes and nocturnal watches in the *ladangs* are a thing of her romantic past. For the wedded couple cannot play around.

*Adat.*

Just in case the *adats* surrounding fidelity are not strong



enough, there are certain tribal penalties that make free love highly expensive. If the husband starts chasing after the wrong sarong, it is only a question of days before the rajah hears of it. He calls in a couple of his secret agents and they promptly set about bringing in the evidence, a procedure which has been duplicated a thousand times by so-called civilized divorce lawyers. The erring husband is brought before a tribunal of his elders—in other words all the old boys gather around to hear the dirt—and is fined up to the extent of his ability to pay. If the transgressions are too promiscuous, he might be fined up to the extent of his whole family's ability to pay. When that happens, there is one sorry-looking boy in the *kampong*. His wife's family treats him like a dog, and his own folks who have been penalized treat him worse.

When it is the woman who is the transgressor, she pays and pays and pays. There is a nasty little hooker in the marriage *adats* that serves to preserve family life even in the face of proven adultery. If the husband wishes to divorce his wife for her amorous free lancing, he can do so, but only at the expense of everything he owns. When he walks out of his home a free man he is down to his last loincloth. His ex-wife keeps the rest. Likewise, if the wife would rid herself of a play-boy head-hunter, he is automatically granted all her property down to the last bead. He takes it, too. Thus the wife who takes a new husband goes to him without even a pot to cook in. The husband who would take a new wife would be so bankrupted by his divorce he couldn't raise the price of a present for his new father-in-law, so he is in bad



shape. Thus by the simple expedient of applying economic pressure, divorce is reduced to a minimum.

Just the same, the bride and groom take no chances. Even when theirs is a marriage of true love, the bride and groom keep their individual possessions separate, and throughout their lives they keep individual accounts of their personal property. In the event the husband feels a divorce coming on, he begins slipping his choicer possessions through a convenient hole in the wall every time a dark night makes it possible. About all he can expect to get away with is a *mandau* or two and a few beads. His observant spouse would immediately spot the absence of anything larger, and that, to say the least, would be disastrous. Males and females are regarded as equals in the affairs of the home, but if the truth were known, the male is decidedly inferior. In affairs of state the male is dominant and the female has to take a back seat, but a little careful investigation will reveal that nine times out of ten the male goes to the meeting of the city council well primed by advice from his wife. Some tribes even have matriarchies, and there the male has less prestige than the female has in a tribe ruled by a rajah. For these reasons hell hath no fury like a Dyak woman releasing her indignation upon the shoulders of her deserting mate. The wake of her wrath is nothing short of total devastation.

Assuming, however, that all goes well with the newlyweds, as it sometimes does, the bride will in due course find herself with child. That is when the spirits, omens and *adats* start working overtime. For the first two or three months of her pregnancy, the wife goes about her household duties



and work in the *ladang* as if nothing had happened. This indifference to her condition is to fool the spirits, who, seeing her thus actively engaged, do not believe she is pregnant and so pass the baby by during the critical period. Unfortunately, her desperate efforts to fool the spirits often result in the very thing she is trying to prevent, a miscarriage. Of course the evil spirits are to blame for the accident. The mother feels she did not work hard enough, the other mothers take warning and work harder, and the result is more miscarriages.

If the expectant mother passes the three-month stage and her condition begins to become visible she realizes the futility of further efforts to deceive the spirit world. In fearful resignation she announces her state by donning a *djad boetit*, or abdominal girdle, and a *djad oeso*, or breast cloth to cover her swelling breasts. When she goes outside she wears a large hat covered with symbols of different colors. She avoids foods which might be offensive to the spirits even when these foods contain the nourishment she needs most. The sight of certain birds and animals or even cloud formations is enough to send her trembling to her house where she sits in terror until the omens become more favorable. Under no circumstances can she kill any animal or eat the young of any species. Small fish and minnows are particularly taboo. The avoidance of aquatic foods during pregnancy is strange since there is a widespread belief that if conception can be accomplished in the water the child will become an excellent swimmer, boat man, crocodile hunter and fisherman.

One of the most tormenting *adats* she must observe is



that requiring her to remain awake during a rain storm. In a country where the rainfall is measured in feet instead of inches, it is a gruesome task to sit in the chill gloom of a damp house listening to the rain spatter on the thatch and leak through to the floor. If she is so thoroughly exhausted that she fails to wake up at the first drop of rain, it is the duty of her husband or some member of her family to awaken her lest tragedy befall the whole lot. Sometimes during the rainy season she is lucky if she can get two hours of uninterrupted sleep per day, and there have been times when pregnant women have been forced to remain awake for forty-eight hours or more. The reason for all this, so far as I have been able to determine, is the sense of respect for the Rain Spirit, most powerful of them all. The Rain Spirit makes everything grow. No rain and the world is dead; no blessing from the Rain Spirit and the child is dead. The one sure way to offend the Rain Spirit or any other is to ignore him, and the one sure way to ignore him is to go to sleep when he is around. So the hapless woman pries her aching lids open and eases her creaking joints as much as possible that the Rain Spirit may be pleased and lend his life-giving force to the seed sprouting within her body.

The husband does not escape the *adats*, though he does dodge the brunt of them. From one month before birth until one month after, he is not allowed to go hunting in the jungle, or even to go into the jungle lest it look as if he were hunting. He cannot cut his hair or pluck his eyebrows because hair plays a powerful part in the spirit world. He cannot tear cloth, or pound a hole into the ground, or eat minnows, or whittle. He must spit his regard for the spirits



in a thousand different directions until his mouth becomes so dry he can spit no more. Then he has to hide until his supply of saliva has been replenished. Any prospective father failing to observe all the countless taboos becomes *parib*, one who has offended the spirits, and when he is *parib*, he is subject to all manner of disease, aches, pains and ultimate death. A person who is *parib* is avoided like the plague. Unquestionably he is filled with evil spirits and hence a good person to stay away from. Lack of companionship forces the man to live within himself, and when he does that he becomes more and more conscious of insignificant ailments, until at last he is really ill. A short time later he dies, unless some favorable omen comes along and restores him to grace.

Should the mother die at childbirth, a not unlikely event, she is done for completely and irrevocably. It is as if she never lived. Her spirit simply disintegrates along with her body, and makes no attempt to set out for Apoe Kesio, the happy spirit world. The corpse of such a woman cannot be touched by any but the oldest women in the tribe. No man will go near the house containing the body lest Bali Kakak, the evil spirit of childbirth, hovering there despoil him of his virility. Young maidens or women still of child-bearing age likewise cannot approach within ten feet of the unfortunate victim. The old women can because they no longer can bear children anyway. There is no funeral. The body is rolled up in a mat, lowered off the verandah with rattan ropes, and dragged off into the jungle where it is left unburied.

In some Kenja tribes it is *adat* that the *dajoeng*, or com-



ination medicine man and priest, choke the newly born infant to death over the unburied remains of its mother. This is done to appease Bali Kakak and also to prevent the mother's homeless spirit from re-entering the *kampung* in search of her baby. In a way this is an act of mercy, because the baby would die of neglect anyway. In other tribes where strangling of the infant is not *adat*, the infant is shunned by everyone because it is believed to be possessed of an evil spirit. I know of no case in which such a child survived more than a few days.

When the birth is normal the old women who act as midwives grab up the yowling youngster and pierce its ear-lobes with splinters of bamboo. The splinter is left in the lobe until the puncture is healed. It is then replaced with a smooth, round stick which is enlarged from time to time until the gaping hole is large enough to hold earrings. Babies of less than six months are often freighted down with earrings weighing as much as a quarter of a pound. Along with teething, colic and earrings, the infantile life of a Dyak is not a happy one.

Names for the babies are picked at random, but seldom consist of more than one or two syllables. The second name of a child is the first name of the father, and the first name of the child becomes the second name of the father by means of a slightly complicated *adat*. As an illustration, Loehoet Ingan marries a girl named Loong Gonong. They do not change their names when they become husband and wife, but when their first born comes along there is a great juggling of surnames. In this case the baby was given the first name of Oka so his full name became Oka Loehoet. The



father, by the process of parenthood, now became Taman Oka Loehoet, the Taman meaning producer. Literally, his name means Loehoet, the producer of Oka. The mother's title becomes Tena Oka Loehoet, meaning the nurse of the Oka produced by Loehoet. For practical purposes the names are shortened to Taman Oka and Tena Oka, or just Tenoka.

Thus does *adat* control every move of the child almost from the moment of conception. But the *adats* do not provide for one thing, and that is the sexual relief of the father during the long months when it is taboo for him to seek the solace of his wife. Young Dyaks accustomed to unlimited indulgence from the age of eleven or twelve find it difficult enough to satisfy themselves with monogamy, and when even this outlet is denied them, they are apt to run *amok*. The heavy fines make it financially inadvisable to seek the company of other women while within the *kampong*, while secret trysts in the jungle are ruled out by the *adats* that prohibit a prospective parent from doing anything that might look as if he were hunting. He is left with three alternatives; masturbation, homosexuality and continence. The last would never occur to him. The other two practices flourish all over Borneo, so much so that they are placed on a competitive basis in public exhibitions.

Extra-curricular sexual activity is not limited to the men. Women also have their peculiarities, a sort of Lesbian sociability that is a survival from the time when the men left on long head-hunting trips that might take them away from the *kampong* for months. In those ancient days the men would obligingly provide their wives with shaped cones,



and the custom has since become *adat*. There is no hint of perversion in the practice. To the Dyak, life consists of three essentials—food, sleep and sex. He can get along without the first two for amazingly long periods, but he will go a long way to accomplish the third. After the three essentials have been provided, he begins to look for comfort, warm houses, rich carvings, fine art and good crops. When he has all these, he looks for spirits to keep him miserable.

There is one astounding custom found nowhere but in Borneo, and that the men should have permitted the women to put it over on them is more astounding than the custom. That is the practice of piercing the penis. Warriors going on a head-hunt or a trade trip to the coast will vow, at the insistence of their wives, to have nothing to do with the opposite sex all the while they are gone. Knowing the men to be chronic liars, the women accept the vows for what they are worth, and demand the exceedingly painful operation as insurance of fidelity.

The piercing in itself is relatively painless; the preparation for the ordeal is another thing. A person hit on the head with a pile driver seldom feels his arches crack, and it is much the same with the Dyak preparing for a siege of continence. By the time the *dajoeng* is ready to puncture the foreskin, the warrior is ready to welcome a mild case of decapitation with relief.

The ordeal begins when the *dajoeng* takes the foreskin and clamps it firmly between two strips of bamboo, each of which has a small hole corresponding with the other. These strips possess the natural resiliency of a steel spring, and



when bound together with green rattan they exert a crushing pressure as agonizing as the grip of a pair of pliers. The writhing warrior must do his best to appear nonchalant about the whole thing. Even a faint, stifled yip would be enough to cause him to lose face, but it is permissible to wriggle around a little like a small boy kept waiting over-long at the bathroom. Such a dance is pretended to be ecstatic appreciation of the spirits' painful attention.

In time the affected area becomes numb, though the region immediately adjacent is anything but quiescent. The *dajoeng*, who has meanwhile been treating other warriors, now returns to check on the result of his anaesthetic. If the victim has not fainted by this time, the *dajoeng* places the bamboo vise on a block of wood, centers the *oetang*, or pointed brass nail, into the hole of the bamboo clamp, and lets fly. The piercing instrument goes through bamboo, foreskin and block. And that, so I am assured, is the operation which does not hurt a bit. The victim merely faints (a sign that his spirit has jumped clear out of his body in rejoicing) and the *dajoeng* extricates the *oetang* as best he can. A short time later, the warrior revives enough to remove the clamp, inserts a bone *oetang* through the holes in the foreskin and binds the wound with soft tree-bark. The bone *oetang* must remain until the wounds are healed; thereafter he carries as formidable an obstacle to loose morals as a chastity belt.

The custom of the pierced penis applies to rich and poor, high and low, though it is gradually dying out as a result of the more liberal attitude being introduced by coastal tribes who live in proximity to the white men. Only in tribes where the women play a dominant role does the practice remain



compulsory, but many men in the other tribes voluntarily submit to the ordeal as a sign of their devotion to their wives.

Rajahs and men of high birth are privileged to wear rings in their perforations instead of *oetangs*. Gold, silver and ivory are preferred. There was a brief flurry in celluloid rings introduced by coastal traders, but this ornament died a sudden and curious death when a warrior so adorned stood too close to the fire while innocently toasting his shins. The reverberations when the highly combustible ring accomplished the inevitable were so colossal that there was not a Dyak in Borneo who did not know of it by morning. Such was the extent of the tragedy, and such was the efficacy of the jungle grapevine when something of really vital importance had to be transmitted.

Wang Lo and I did not learn all this within the space of a single afternoon, but we got pictures of most of it and asked the questions later. Some questions took days to answer because the Dyaks themselves did not know the whys beyond the fact that they were *adat*. Every now and then I would come across some old *dajoeng* better informed than most, and if he couldn't give me the straight dope, he could give me enough of a lead to let logic furnish the rest. Wang Lo, less concerned with the whys than with the results, only knew that he was a bachelor, and as such was entitled to the wide selectivity afforded the unattached. He spent hours working over his limited Dyak vocabulary with only one purpose in mind: to convince the brown dryads of the *kampongs* that because his skin was yellow he was no different from their brothers. He had simply faded. I don't know how he made out, but he didn't seem unhappy.



## CHAPTER 10: HEAD-HUNTERS

UNTIL recent years, head-hunting flourished all over Dutch Borneo, but of late the Colonial Army and the missionaries have succeeded in stamping it out in their localities. It has been many years since a head has been taken near a barracks, and so far as I know, none at all near a mission. It is against the white man's strange laws, and as such is strictly taboo whenever a white man's army with guns is in the neighborhood.

It is easy to explain head-hunting. To the Dyak, a dried skull is the most powerful magic in the world. A freshly cut head is potent enough to save an entire *kampong* from the plague. A seasoned head, properly manipulated, is powerful enough to produce rain, increase the rice yield, warn away evil spirits, and impart knowledge to the tribe's wise men. If it doesn't, it is because its power is fading and a fresher skull is needed. Of course, the more dried heads there are, the greater the power exercised by their combined efforts. A tribe without an *ulu*, or head, to its name is in no condition to ward off the *mandaus* and poison darts of a more fortunately equipped neighbor.

Boi Djalong provided me with much information con-



cerning *tjoot djenan kajau*, or going head-hunting, meanwhile professing a complete lack of first-hand knowledge. Since, however, most of the *ngajau*, or head-hunting, anecdotes he related were autobiographical in nature, and so many of the *ulus* hanging on his verandah and over his fireplace were of recent harvesting, I had to take his protests of innocence with a grain of salt. As a matter of fact, if I had appeared to believe Boi Djalong's story of total abstinence, he would have been a most indignant Dyak.

The trouble was, Boi Djalong had been altogether too successful in his head harvesting. His collection contained some of the finest specimens in Borneo; his crops were good and his supply of magic more than adequate to last out the year. He would lead no more head-hunts for a long time. If I was going to get some first-hand information on head-hunting, I would have to move on to a more desperate *kampong* where the economic pressure was greater.

For the price of a few agate marbles, a hatchet and a silk sarong, Boi Djalong was perfectly willing to co-operate. My crew of Dyaks from the Mahakam River, he pointed out, would be highly regarded by other tribes along the Kajan River. If it was a head-hunt I wanted, I could use my own crew for bait. I appreciated his logic, but in the course of plowing through two Rain Forests, I had grown attached to the rascals who were so ready to sell me short every time a likely-looking ghost came along. At times I had been ready to take a head or two of theirs myself, but that some other tribe should cast hungry looks at my boys was something else again. I firmly rejected the suggestion.

Boi Djalong's second suggestion was more to my liking.



For an additional dozen marbles and a siren-whistle he would furnish board and room for my boys, and supply me with a crew of his own warriors to take me to the next *kampong*. He would keep my men intact until such a time as I returned for them. I looked him over closely to see if I could find any ulterior motive in those close-set eyes of his, but he looked honest. Just to make sure, however, I politely promised complete extermination of him and his tribe if any harm befell my boys. On top of that I placed a few curses, a couple of rings of black magic, and some incantations around the hut in which the crew was to be sheltered. One drop of blood spilled in violence would be enough to release the curses and flood the *kampong* with evil spirits.

Boi Djalong beamed with delight at the insult. He felt highly flattered that I should erect such powerful barriers around my boys. It was a tribute to his position. Any lesser chief would have had to be satisfied with just a couple of second-rate curses, but not he. The whole book for that mighty man.

The boys Boi Djalong gave me were good workers, the first day. They were like kids in a hurry to get away from home. Once they got beyond the jurisdiction of their *kampong* limits, the work slackened off. Now they were in the domain of foreign spirits, and they were in no hurry to go plunging into some unknown *adats*. Better to take it easy and feel their way lest they give offense before they knew there was anything to offend.

On the trail these Kenja-Dyaks are not the simple, happy yokels they are at home. Give them a couple of lianas to



sneak through and they become the cruellest, most ferocious, most treacherous killers in all Borneo. Their reputation for ferocity is based on fact. They take more heads, eat more human flesh and cause more trouble than any other ten tribes combined. But they are not brave. Their dirty work is done from ambush against numerically inferior war parties. So all the while we were on the river or carrying through portages, they had their scouts out looking for easy game.

Theoretically the Apo-Kajan is a territory occupied by one big happy family. Rajah Lendjau Djok who maintains his palace in Long Nawang is the direct descendant of the first man in Borneo. Just who this man was or how he got there in the first place is a matter of some concern to the *dajoengs* and the *dajoengs poon*, or high priests, but since none of them can agree, the only conclusion one can come to is that there must have been a first man because Lendjau Djok is his direct descendant. Rajah Lendjau Djok's presence in Long Nawang makes that the metropolis of the land. Certainly it is the largest and richest *kampong* in the Apo-Kajan, and counts among its citizens the greatest number of *paren bui*, or men of noble birth. Royalty is determined by the degree of relationship to the rajah. Brothers and first cousins are the highest, and so on down to cousins of the fiftieth generation. Genealogy is a serious study, which accounts for the great importance attached to the *batu tulois*, or ancestral stones piled up in front of every long-house. Some poor chap starving to death down at the end of the village can always console himself by hunting up the *batu*



*tuloi* indicating that his grandfather ten times removed was a second cousin of the rajah at that time.

In the course of the centuries various royal brothers have left Long Nawang to establish *kampongs* of their own, until today there is not a congregation of more than ten people whose chief cannot claim some vague relationship to Lendjau Djok. Thus the rajah of each *kampung* is related in one way or another with the rajah of the next. And a fine, happy relationship it is. Death on sight; if I see you first, or if you are alone. Under more ceremonious circumstances the rajahs might get together, along with sufficient warriors to guarantee safe conduct, and have one bang-up family reunion. I'd say, after a visit to most of the *kampongs*, that family ties are kept at the status quo by each *kampung's* preserving enough of its neighbors' heads to maintain its own self-respect.

That was why, even when I was merely going down the river to visit Boi Djalong's cousin, I watched my crew like a hawk; and so did Wang Lo, Taman Kila, Achmed, Wirio, Admo and Kitjil. We might be welcome, but there was no telling whether the welcome was greatest around the hearth or the stew pot.

As a matter of fact, it was just as well that we did. We found Boi Djalong's cousin Taman Bit to be an altogether bad egg. On top of that, he was smart. He had traveled far, and he had seen much, as various scars and tattoos on his tall, lithe body indicated. One set of scars around his ankles meant nothing less than that at one time he had been on the chain-gang. I recalled the event. About twenty years before the Dutch Army had made a determined effort to stamp



out head-hunting and had sent an expeditionary force into the Apo-Kajan to see what could be done about it. The army came in, caught a dozen chiefs and rushed them back to the coast to serve time on the chain-gang. As a punitive measure it had been worse than useless, because every one of the prisoners so treated returned to the Apo-Kajan with more prestige than when he had left, plus all the bad tricks he had picked up on the coast. Such a guy was Taman Bit. He not only sported the leg-iron scars, he also had them tattooed blue for emphasis.

Some of the chain-gang prisoners had learned a lot and used it to their advantage and to the increased prosperity of their tribe, but not Taman Bit. His *kampung* was one of the worst I saw in the whole Apo-Kajan. The *belawang* pole was so rotten no one dared climb up it to hang his offerings lest it collapse beneath him, a horrible catastrophic omen. Dead chickens, a rotting wild pig, and mounds of rotten eggs were piled at the foot of the pole in a fermenting mess, attesting to the villagers' desperate efforts to woo some favors from the spirits. Their rice crop was spoiling in the *ladangs* because the omens forbade harvesting. A dozen men were down with fever, and the whole lot was slowly starving to death in the midst of plenty.

Taman Bit was hostile. He wouldn't come down to the river to meet us, but he didn't quite dare tell us to move on. That would be too offensive a breach of hospitality, and might result in retaliatory measures by a tribe much more powerful than his emaciated crew. Instead he sulked on the verandah while we unloaded and made our march past the stinking *belawang* pole.



For half an hour I tried to cajole him into a more favorable attitude, but the more placating my speech, the greater became his insolence. Taman Kila could hardly restrain himself in translating the insulting remarks. In the end I decided the only thing for me to do was put the old coot into an appropriate frame of mind, and at once.

Taman Bit had an old large-barreled shotgun to which he attached great store. While never exactly aiming it at anyone, he let it be known that the thing was loaded and might go off at any time. On the pretense of wishing to examine the barrel, I took it from him, at the same time telling Wang Lo to fetch me a small stick of dynamite. Wang Lo was only too willing. When we got through, Taman Bit's shotgun was loaded for bear.

"My magic," I explained to Taman Bit. He watched sullenly, not daring to protest. His whole tribe was around him watching this show-down between my magic and his. If he had backed down, he would have lost face.

I wasn't going to hold that gun, nor could I let anyone else do it. I finally propped it up against a tiny picket fence around a sweet potato. I had a fresh shotgun shell of my own which I used to replace the antique shell Taman Bit had in the gun. Mine didn't fit too well, but it was good enough for the purpose. Next I shoved the stick of dynamite down the barrel. A fish line was tied to the trigger. From a distance of about two hundred feet, after moving all the awed natives back with me, I yanked the trigger.

The gun vanished. So did part of the verandah on Taman Bit's house, and a couple of chickens that happened along.

One thing the blast of dynamite did that I hadn't figured



on was to scare hell out of every living thing within a few miles of the *kampung*. Before the echoes had rumbled away the air was full of howling monkeys and a hundred different kinds of screeching birds. Taman Kila, being something of an opportunist and wanting to increase my prestige, howled in high glee and pointed to a dozen *kihing* and *tsit* birds that were circling in bewilderment over the *kampung*.

"Get in your rice," Taman Kila shouted. "There are your favorable omens. The great *Tuan blanda* has brought you good omens."

The gawking, half-starved-to-death, half-scared-to-death villagers needed no second urging. No matter what birds were their good luck symbols, they had only to look into the sky to pick them out. With hysterical shrieks of delight they ran into the *ladangs* and began yanking up the heavy-headed stalks by hand. The superstition-created famine was over. Naturally this did not make Taman Bit feel any better, and every time he looked at the hole where his prized gun had been, and looked at the ruin of his verandah, he felt worse.

I let him brood until dusk. The men and women returned from the *ladangs* with the first grain of the harvest, and the rice pots were full. The scrawny dogs sensed the celebration in the air and started to slink into the timber, but a dozen or so weren't fast enough. A couple of muffled yelps, and the rice pots were richer by some fresh meat. That started a stampede, and before the hunt was over the *kampung* was denuded of pets and such chickens as didn't gain the tree tops. Supper that night was a glorious affair that lasted until midnight. Taman Bit tried to sulk it out,



but he was just as hungry as the rest, and when I invited him over to share my own stew, along with fresh coffee and canned peaches he broke down completely.

After that we were pals, with reservations. Instead of quartering me in the miserable guest house that was falling down at the end of the village, he invited me to share his hearth, apologizing the while for the sorry shape of his shattered verandah. I told him that even with his verandah blown away his house was one of the finest I had ever seen, that his carved door was the most artistic, his hearth the widest. Just the same I had Wang Lo and Taman Kila sleep with me that night, along with their shotguns.

My lack of confidence in Taman Bit was not misplaced. That boy was head-hungry. I don't think he exactly hankered after mine, but I do think he would have made it do until something better came along. Bright and early the next day, while I was still combing the filth of his hearth out of my hair, he was after me to lend the support of my guns on a nice little hunt in the direction of the next *kampong*.

"They are very careless," he urged. "Many times they go into the jungle after bananas all alone."

Taman Kila translated this a little wistfully while Wang Lo listened, his almond eyes almost popping as the significance of what Taman Bit was saying sank home. Taman Kila, I could see, was not entirely indifferent to the call of the wild. His coastal rearing might have weakened his lust for blood, but it had not eliminated it.

Somehow Taman Bit knew that while I was white and hence a representative of the government that had once put



him in chains, I did not hold an official position. Perhaps it was because my conduct was not strictly military. At any rate, he wanted very desperately the loan of my guns, or if not that, at least the loan of my crew, in a little cranium collecting. It was not the first time I had been placed in that position nor the last. All too often when a tribe has a yen to do a little hunting but lacks the manpower, and a crew of warriors drops by for a little social chit-chat, the rajah will grasp the opportunity to try to recruit them for a campaign.

Of course I said no, and of course Taman Bit went to work behind my back on Boi Djalong's boys. They did not share my moral scruples. That was why, when I woke up on my third morning in the *kampung*, I missed half the male population and most of the crew furnished me by Boi Djalong. Out hunting for bananas, Taman Kila informed me regretfully. I knew exactly what kind of bananas he meant.

Bali Akang was the spirit of the day. His name was on every tongue. *Bali* in the Dyak dialect means spirit, and *akang* means courage. The spirit of courage, embodied in the head-hunt. Everything that is great and powerful is *akang*, and greatest of all these is the courage that leads to taking a head. The men of the *kampung* were out to get a head, so that the prosperity I had brought might be perpetuated. To the ones who remained behind it was a day of salvation in which all the despair and poverty of the past would be washed out in the blood of the decapitated foe. It really didn't matter if he was a foe or not, just so he was



decapitated. In the face of a religion as deeply rooted as the Dyak's, of what use is the white man's logic?

The harvesting went on with renewed vigor, and every time a stray dog stuck its nose out of the brush it was pounced on by a dozen wild-eyed boys. Food was being piled up for the *mamat ulu*, the greatest of all feasts during which the freshly taken heads would be blessed. Old men went around the outskirts of the *kampung* setting up new poles designed to frighten away such spirits as Bali Leang, Bali Kadjang, and Bali Menut, the invisible representatives of cowardice, physical weakness and sickness. Only Bali Akang was welcome during the *mamat ulu*. Huge piles of sang palm leaves were cut because Bali Sang, the spirit of this life-giving palm tree, was the only spirit of sufficient potency to keep company with Bali Akang. The palm tree provides both food and shelter to make life possible; the spirit of courage makes life worth living. The palm fronds would serve a dozen purposes, as plates for the food, as mats for the dancers, as wrappers for the heads, as mattresses for the sleepers, and as fans to ward off evil spirits, to name only a few of its uses.

I wandered around the *kampung*, closely followed by Wang Lo, Taman Kila and my Malayan bodyguard, while the tension mounted all around us. There was an air of expectancy that was almost unholy in its intensity. The village was blood-parched and now the end of the drought was in sight.

There never was any doubt but what the warriors would come back with heads. Either they came back with heads,



or they wouldn't come back at all. Once the hunt was on there was no backing down or reporting failure.

Youngsters eight and ten years old waged terrific battles, using wooden *mandaus* and miniature *klebits*, or shields. Older boys who were privileged to wear real *mandaus* of steel or bronze self-consciously sharpened their weapons in the presence of their feminine admirers. Like everything else, the *mandau* has a spirit, a powerful one, and only boys of proven strength are permitted to handle the weapon lest the spirit take offense and turn the blade against the bearer. Old men were not above polishing their *mandaus* in conspicuous places, and those whose weapons bore the coveted lock of hair sliced from the scalp of a slain foe took great pains to see that the hair was well combed and sleekly oiled.

The atmosphere of the *kampong* was gay, but not with the gaiety of a rustic holiday. Spontaneous outbursts were usually centered about some exploit of cruelty. A small boy sneaking up on a companion and knocking him unconscious with a well-aimed club would call forth howls of laughter. A boy luring a dog from beneath the verandah or from the sanctuary of the jungle with promises of food and then treacherously slaying the poor beast with a knife thrust would win boisterous approval. Others would perform fanatical feats of self-torture, such as burning pieces of resin on their skin to prove their worthiness in the eyes of Bali Akang. It was carnival time, but a carnival of cruelty.

In this seething atmosphere of near hysteria, anything could happen. *Mandaus* might flash without provocation. Ancient grudges might flare into murder. But even though the flame to kill burned openly, there was a sly and sinister



cunning in the performance of any violent act. The urge to kill might come on suddenly, but not until darkness had fallen or the victim had unwittingly stepped beyond range of help, would the killer strike. For that reason we aliens stuck close together. We might be welcome guests, and the welcome might be sincere and earnest, but we might be even more welcome as heads.

The Dyak regard for human life is strangely limited. He not only cares little for the lives of others, but has no particular regard for his own. The head of a family knows that, should he be murdered, his survivors will be cared for just as well by relatives. Maybe life counts so little because the race is receding instead of advancing. Leaders who do not lead but only follow the customs of the past are no great loss should death suddenly interrupt their careers. Some other leader can do just as well at following precedent grooved by hundreds of years of habit. At any rate, a comparatively minor offense will provoke a fatal retaliation where in more civilized countries the punishment would not exceed a small fine. It can well be said that at certain times a Dyak would just as soon kill you as look at you, and mean you no particular harm in doing it. Such a time is the period of *mamat ulu*.

Keeping calm under such circumstances is merely a matter of keeping busy. Wang Lo and I kept the Eyemo cameras grinding on anything and everything that looked good. It was an excellent time to record customs of dress because with a celebration in the offing the men and women were really putting on some clothes. In the semi-nude one Dyak looks pretty much like another, and class distinction is left



to the imagination. Now, however, they were shaking the vermin and mildew out of their glad rags and getting set for the big day. It had been so long since the poor people had had anything to celebrate, that Taman Bit's wife fell off the verandah pole the first time she tried to climb down clad in an ankle-length velvet sarong. The air was filled with dust and vituperation the instant she hit, and any bad omens that might have been around to take advantage of the situation were frightened away. Wang Lo filmed the entire accident, but as usual he had exhausted the hundred foot roll of film and was shooting blanks.

As the *kampung* flowered with bright sarongs and embellished jackets the distinction between the nobility and the common herd became immediately apparent. Each sarong was embroidered according to the wealth and station of its occupant. Only Taman Bit's wife could wear a complete human figure embroidered on her sarong, though some of her closest relatives could wear patterns depicting certain portions of the human anatomy. Less distinguished members of society had to content themselves with symbols of animal origin, but only in isolated instances could the whole figure be shown. Among these the dragon has been the rage in fashion these last few hundred years.

I talked over the style situation with Embang, Taman Bit's wife, and this interesting, half-toothless old harridan gave me quite a story. She was a *dajoeng* of the tribe, which meant she was a witch doctor, spiritual advisor, translator of omens and storehouse of knowledge on things of the past. A female *dajoeng* is not at all unusual among the Dyaks, but I doubt if the spirits ever met a more rigid disciplinarian



than Taman Bit's wife. Her big complaint was that the men in her tribe, and especially her husband, were such cowards that they refused to move into the *ladangs* after she had put the evil spirits to flight. They admitted her ability to scare demons (her face alone was enough to do the trick) but they doubted that anyone of the female sex had the power to keep them away. So the bad omens came, and with them came poverty. The houses fell apart, the roofs leaked, the food bins were empty, and the harvest rotted, and all the while Embang sat out in the *ladangs* chasing demons while the menfolk sat in the *kampong* afraid to work. She took a liking to me because of the way I had handled her husband's shotgun, and because I was no more afraid of demons than she was.

She pointed out the human figure, worked in with silver thread, on her sarong with a great deal of pride. "Only I can wear it," she assured me. "The pattern of the human body is very powerful magic. Because it looks like a person, the spirits are always trying to enter it. If I wasn't more powerful than they, they would take over the figure, then the sarong, and then me. My sister wears half a figure on her sarong. Only the weaker spirits are satisfied with half a body and she is stronger than a weak spirit, but if she put on a whole human figure the evil ones would overpower her. She is not strong like me. The rest of the women"—she spat a big wad of betel nut juice into the dust—"they are stronger than animal spirits so they can wear animal figures on their sarongs. But if they put on a dragon, they have to be careful not to include the head. The dragon head is very powerful, very powerful indeed." -





The tweezers for plucking eyebrows and eyelashes and the short knife for shaving are Borneo's two most important beauty aids.





Taman Bit. Two clumps of hair decorating his *mandau* indicate his participation in two human kills. His wife, Embang, is probably not more than thirty.



I asked her about the bead work on some of the sarongs, jackets and caps, but she couldn't help me out there. Some of the beads were obviously trade goods, but there were others so old it was impossible to guess their origin. Tiny flecks of quartz, agate, carnelian and, I am sure, diamond, had been polished round and hand drilled. The thought of the amount of work involved in drilling one bead was staggering, and I stopped before I became completely exhausted thinking about the hundreds of men working on the thousands and thousands of beads. Magic properties are ascribed to the ancient beads and they command a high price, especially when they are large enough to be worn in belts or necklaces.

When it came to the necklaces, old Embang was of more help. She identified the various articles favored by the men and women alike. Crocodile teeth for protection in the water, panther fangs for protection in the jungle, hornbill beaks for protection from the sky, and all the kindred forms of ornamentation plus protection. Feathers, shells, eggs and seeds all had certain properties that made them invaluable in repelling evil spirits.

Earrings, Embang informed me, were *adat*, but beyond that she could not hazard a guess. Some of the women wore them by the pound, and in a free-for-all scrap the nastiest hold a woman could grab was her opponent's earrings. Many a battle-scarred Amazon sported a torn ear lobe from which her earring had been yanked. Those so handicapped in beauty tried to compensate for it by overloading the other ear so much that they had to walk lopsided, with their heads tilted way over on the heavy side.



In the face of all the superstitions concerning garments, it was actually surprising to find that certain articles were worn for no other reason than that they filled a definite need for clothes. Caps of rattan kept the hair out of the eyes, palm-leaf capes kept the rain off the body, and a little rattan flap over the seat of the sarong served no other purpose than as something to sit on. A personal floor mat, as it were.

Embang chuckled with sly viciousness, pointing to two girls who were plucking each other's eyebrows. "They are getting pretty for the returning warriors but it will be ten days before they can have a man. It is terrible to be so young and wait so long."

I asked what she meant, and she explained through Taman Kila that it is taboo for a warrior to be with a woman after returning from a head-hunt because a woman is weak, and her frailties might taint him in his hour of greatest strength. "The heads have poured their powerful magic into the warriors," she said, "and now they are mighty men. After the *mamat ulu* the magic has settled into the bodies of the warriors and cannot get away. Then they can take their women again, and, what a rush there is to be the first with a man back from a head-hunt! His loins are rich with magic strength, and fortunate is the woman who can capture that strength. If a child is born from such a union he will be the mightiest warrior in the land."

I told her I thought that sounded logical, and she replied in a strangely soft voice, yes, it was so. "My own son was so born. He was a tremendous fighter, too good for this *kampong* of cowards. When the enemy attacked one sunrise, my



boy led all the rest to fight, but the enemy was strong. Everyone ran away but my boy, who fought so bravely with his *mandau*, that the spirits took him to be with them."

She left me then to raise hell with some youngsters who were tearing the *siraps*, the large wooden shingles, off her house in pursuit of a monkey that was racing along the ridgepole. A mean, vicious old dame through and through, but she had displayed the first sentimental side I had seen among the Dyaks. If she hadn't momentarily dropped the impassive mask from in front of Dyak family behavior I might never have come as close to them as I did. I liked the old battle-ax.

While our *kampung* was preparing for the *mamat ulu*, some twenty-five warriors were sneaking through the jungle outside of the *kampung* called "careless" by Taman Bit. As I got the story later from Lihan, they scattered to surround the whole town for a battle of extermination, but by translating the tall tales in terms of Dyak cowardice as I knew it, the actual facts of the case were more probably like this:

Taman Bit, by virtue of his authority as rajah, was in the lead, but if his own personal tastes were to be consulted, he would have much preferred to be further back in the line. The boys stuck so closely together they were practically treading on each other's heels, lest the evil spirits or the equally malignant enemy snipe off the rear guard. When they were close enough to the *kampung* to smell it—within a mile if the jungle was not more than ordinarily fetid—they began to circle, hunting for a banana or coconut grove that would be frequently visited by small groups of men.

They found one grove of bananas, but after lying in



ambush there for two days without sight of a human being, they came to the terrifying decision that the grove must be taboo. Scared to death, they fled the place, racing through the jungle as fast as they could go. When the lianas became too thick to crash through bodily, they dived through the interstices head first, expecting every moment to feel the clammy hand of the banana grove demon. The unfortunate thing about their flight was that it took them away from home. When they finally ran out of breath they were confronted with the awful fact that they had to return by the way of the same grove of bananas.

Two more days went by before an omen came along strong enough to favor a return trip. This omen, in the form of a little *tsit* bird, flew above Taman Bit's head while he crowded with his men in a small clearing, and then headed in the direction of home. Considerably heartened by this indication of spiritual blessing, they began a slow, cautious trek through the jungle. They were so frightened they moved like shadows, not daring to scrape the bark off a liana lest they dislodge a spirit. And so they came upon three men crouched over a small fire barbecuing a wild pig.

It was a case of twenty-five warriors against three, which made the odds about even as far as Taman Bit's men were concerned. For one second they debated the issue, but in that second the trio around the fire sensed danger. They leaped up with drawn *mandaus*. Even then they had a chance, for if they had stuck together, there is no doubt in my mind that Taman Bit and his men would have been afraid to tackle the whirling blades. But one of their number broke and ran. Instantly the brave twenty-five broke



out of the brush in a charge. They were like wild dogs, furiously brave while the quarry was fleeing. They swarmed over the two who stood together, and the whole mass went down.

When it was over, twenty-four men stood there, and at their feet lay three severed heads. One head, an unrecognizable pulp, had once adorned the shoulders of one of Boi Djalong's warriors named Ngang. This particular warrior had insulted Taman Bit by telling him Boi Djalong had a much finer lodge. Now Taman Bit could very well say that in the melee Ngang was slain by the two enemy warriors, but it is my guess that Taman Bit killed him out of spite. It has happened before. They never did catch up to the third man who made a run for it; but at least they had three heads. They could ask for no more.

Now followed the grisly process of curing the heads. It is a source of amazement to me that a race as artistically inclined as the Dyak is so careless in the way it cures heads, especially in view of the fact that they set such a high value on them. The Jivaros of South America, a far less civilized tribe than the Dyak, turn out an exquisitely shrunken head that is a duplicate in miniature of the original; the Marind-Anim tribe of Dutch New Guinea carefully skins the head, cleans the skull, and then replaces the skin over the bone to duplicate the original as much as possible, and yet there is no race in the world as low in the scale of civilization as the Marind-Anims.

But here were the Dyaks, comparatively far advanced, sitting around three heads like a bunch of ghouls, slicing off bunches of hair, so they could have ornaments for their



*mandaus*. After cutting off enough to satisfy everyone, they went on with the business of smoking the heads.

Since the interrupted trio had already thoughtfully provided a fire, the job was done on the spot. No longer were the warriors a frightened bunch of cowards. They had fresh heads in their midst, and that gave them a spiritual power so great no avenging war party would dare attack them. The victorious twenty-four gleefully set about piling green sang palm leaves on the fire until the smoke poured out in a thick column. It didn't matter to them that one of the heads belonged to one of their own members. He was dead, and it would be an insult to say his head was not as good as anybody else's.

The Dyaks call it a smoking process. Actually it is more of a cremation. A green bamboo stick is thrust into the severed neck, and the head is suspended over the smoke and flame as indifferently as if it were a chunk of steak. Hair, skin and flesh is smoked into a hard lump. The duration of this curing process depends upon the heat and smoke of the fire. When done, the head is removed and wrapped in sang palm leaves for transportation. Only this palm possesses a spirit powerful enough to remain in the company of a fresh head.

The return trip is made in a rush, the warriors taking turns in carrying the trophies so that each may get the benefit of the powerful life-giving magic. They can hardly wait to be acclaimed heroes. If they have a drum with them, they announce their coming from miles away, but in this case the drum had been the first thing sacrificed when they fled from the haunted banana grove. The drummer



had dived through a liana network and the drum hadn't. Instead he was compelled to pound on a section of bamboo about three hundred feet from the *kampong*.

Instantly pandemonium broke loose in town. Every person able to walk, crawl or hobble raced out into the street hunting for omens. This time they were looking for a *plaki*, or hawk, any kind of a *plaki*, because that was the only type of bird strong enough in spirit to provide an omen to admit the returning hunters. The old men around the edge of the *kampong* reinforced their symbolical barricade against the spirits of cowardice, weakness and disease. By special concession of Taman Bit's wife I was out in the middle of the street with my Eyemo camera getting it all down on film. Normally they would not let me take pictures of such a ceremony, because my picture box might thus imprison their spirits at a time when they needed them most. Taman Bit's wife, after some dickering, agreed that between us we could cancel any spirit kidnappings my picture box might perpetrate.

Such is the perversity of omens that in a sky ordinarily full of hawks, not a one showed up until the next day. In the meantime the triumphant warriors had to squat out in the brush until they received word from the *kampong* that it was safe to come in. It rained all night, too.

Along about noon two hawks came floating over, whereupon one of the old men pounded the bark off a *djetung*, or drum, on his verandah. If I hadn't blown up Taman Bit's drum when the dynamite took off his front porch, that would have been the instrument to summon the warriors.

We heard them coming, shrieking their victory yell,



about five minutes later. Wang Lo and I both were at our cameras, with the rest of our bodyguards backing us up, and I started shooting as the first boys came racing in like brown streaks through the black shadows of the jungle. The rest were right behind.

When they reached the demon barricade they dropped the fresh heads on the outside and then danced through in a wild race for the *belawang* pole. Not until they had circled this completely could they go back and bring in the heads. Too many powerful spirits of evil intentions accompanied the trophies, so the warriors who had carried them had to fumigate themselves of demons by circling the *belawang* pole. Once cleansed, they could return for the heads, and bring them in. At this point the heads were powerful magic for good or bad, but their spiritual potency was in a state of flux. Their power had to be directed into benevolent channels by the celebration of *mamat ulu*, and until that was complete they were surrounded by taboos. No woman, for instance, could look upon a fresh head. The powerful evil spirits of the head would enter her weak body and she would shrivel on the spot.

The best way to insure a benevolent attitude on the part of a new head was to treat it well. Each head, before it enters the *kampong*, is accordingly fitted out with a gala cap of sang palm leaves. It is then ceremoniously carried to the *belawang* pole, where the victorious warriors pay tribute to Bali Akang in gratitude for the courage that enabled twenty-five men to kill two enemies and one of their own men, and to put a third to flight.

All the men who did not participate in the expedition



now paid their respects to the heads. All were dressed in their best and they said very flattering things to the trophies. Women had to remain indoors while the men feasted their eyes on the grisly cinders which now looked like nothing more than badly burned coconuts. All in all it was a very satisfactory day for the men. Among other things, the presence of the heads assured them that they would not be turned to stone some dark night when the evil spirits were abroad. Fresh heads are positive insurance against turning into stone. I spent some time trying to get to the bottom of the curious belief that fresh heads were necessary from time to time if the tribe was to avoid a rocky fate, and came to the conclusion that the answer lay in the mysterious stone idols found buried deep in the jungle of Apo-Kajan. None of the present Dyaks had seen the idols themselves, but they knew about them because the territory in which they lay was taboo, never to be entered at any price. The idols were nothing less than people who had failed to get fresh heads, so the Dyaks believe.



## CHAPTER 11: MAMAT ULU

LITTLE is done in the way of actual celebration during the day of the warrior's return. The victorious head-hunters are called *ajaus*, meaning they are still filled with fresh, untamed spirits which must be whipped into line during the remaining eight days of the *mamat ulu*. They cannot sleep inside their houses this first night lest some of these spirits escape and pollute the chambers. Instead they must sleep on the verandah, but even this is a welcome relief from sleeping on the ground. The first day is called *pedjaka*, which means nothing more than that the boys have returned.

The second day, called *napo sang*, launches the festival. At the first hint of sunrise the *aggong djangin*, or the largest gong, in the *kampong* is beaten until the jungle reverberates. All the *ajaus* begin the process of purification, which consists of cutting a small fresh stick, peeling off the bark, and planting the butt in the ground. The top is split and a fresh sang leaf inserted in the crack to represent a sang palm tree. More sang leaves are collected to be hung over the verandah rail in front of each *ajau's* abode. The sang leaves, of course, are in tribute to the sang palm spirit, running mate of the spirit of courage represented by the heads.



When the palm ceremony is over, the whole *kampung* takes time off to stage a *pasa*, or canoe race, the residents on the down stream side of the rajah's house competing against those on the upstream side. War canoes are used, and the paddlers work absolutely naked, a precautionary measure taken in the interests of public safety. In the excitement of having fresh heads in the *kampung*, plus the murderous suggestiveness contained in the use of war canoes, an ordinary boat race might suddenly become a horrible debacle if the paddlers were permitted to wear their *mandaus*.

The villagers eat well during this second day, but the real feasting is still to come. On the second night the population would normally congregate on the rajah's verandah to listen to each *ajau* give his version of the glorious victory, but since I had blown Taman Bit's verandah sky high, we moved down to the verandah of Taman Bit's brother-in-law. The bull-slinging was terrific. By midnight the three poor banana hunters became three hundred ferocious devils armed to the teeth with *mandaus* and reinforced by seven thousand shrieking demons. As each liar would get up to give his version, he would start out calmly enough, but pretty soon he would be demonstrating just how his *mandau* came down on the neck of the foe. Dancing, leaping, swinging and slashing, he would become a whirling dervish as dangerous as a runaway buzz saw. It was more than my life was worth to listen to his story too closely, lest in getting wrapped up in the yarn I should also get wrapped up in the *mandau*.

Shortly after midnight all the women and children were



sent inside to sleep. There was no sleep for the *ajaus* that night, for they must remain awake to admit the spirit of Bali Akang into their bodies. This is the night of *dajong*, and any warrior who is asleep when Bali Akang calls is automatically doomed. Always the night is spent in story telling, the older men reviving yarns of their past heroics while the young men, who have heard the same stories a hundred times, struggle mightily to remain awake. At dawn all the gongs in the *kampong* are pounded in great rejoicing. Bali Akang has entered the bodies of the *ajaus*, and the prosperity of the *kampong* is assured.

The third day, called *peloebit*, is of greatest importance for on that day the Bali Akang who has entered the bodies of the *ajaus* is now passed around to give his powers to the rest of the villagers, including the women and children. The ceremony was held in front of Taman Bit's brother-in-law's verandah hearth, every person in the *kampong* standing in gaping anticipation in the street. No one was too sick to stand or too old to walk, they got there some way, for today they would receive the powerful spirits that would make them young and well again.

Taman Bit stood in front of the fire with his pile of *batu tulois*, or ancestral stones around him, and his wife, serving in her capacity as *dajoeng*, stood near by, keeping the stones covered with sang palm leaves. The *ajaus* were seated in a semi-circle, facing the fire, and around them paraded eight girls, each with a live rooster in her arms. The girls, allegedly virgins, eyed the *ajaus* with a keen expectancy that had nothing virginal in it, and proceeded with the rites that were old long before the Druids did mys-



terious things with chickens in the oak forests of England.

Suddenly one of the girls thrusts a chicken over the pile of *batu tulois*, holding its head in one hand, the legs in the other. An *ajau's mandau* flashes and the girl holds the severed head and the body over the leaf covered mound of stones. Blood drips, and the crowd gasps. Excitement becomes explosive with suppression.

One by one the virgins hold forth their offering for decapitation until the pile of ancestral stones is soaked with blood. Then with the bloody chicken head they smear the right arm of each *ajau*, and finally that of every man, woman and child in town. Not until everyone has been thus anointed can they spread the beneficial stains on their own arms. Now they are all marked for quick recognition by Bali Akang.

Following this gory episode there is great activity on the verandah while the *ajaus* roll the ancestral stones around, spreading blood over everything. In this stone rolling they absorb the strength housed in the stones, and at the same time refresh the magic of the stones with the power of their new spirits. It is like recharging a spiritual battery. Out on the street the rest of the villagers jump around in great glee.

The moment has now come that everyone has been waiting for. With a great deal of self-importance, three of the older men of the tribe pick up the new heads, and each one impales a head on the end of a stick. Then he marches around, permitting every person to touch the terrifying thing and thus cleanse himself or herself of bad spirits. The rush to be the first to touch the heads is beyond description.



Men have had their throats cut and women have had their brains bashed out in the melee. In this case, one old man was so badly trampled that his throat was crushed and he died two days later.

Following this distribution of spiritual medicine, the three old men performed another curious rite. Taking the heads down to the river they dipped them into the water, and then held them up in the air that the water dripping from the heads might flow over their own bodies and particularly over their genitals. A few more wistful old men came down to the water's edge and were likewise treated, for it is firmly believed that water dripping from a newly reaped head has the power to restore virility. Where a belief is so largely based on wishful thinking, it is not surprising that this treatment produces at least temporary results. And that, for these old boys, was enough.

That night the women prepared a more generous supper than on the preceding day, and the exhausted *ajaus* ate heavily. After supper they remained awake only long enough to add a tucan feather to their war bonnets, symbolizing their victorious head-hunt. Then they returned to their respective verandahs and dropped unconscious.

The fourth day, called *napo oeloe jap*, is a day of dancing, and the first overt manifestation of sex creeps into the festivities. The women, both married and unmarried, begin the peculiarly passive muscle dancing that has such a profound effect upon the males. Drum and gong rhythms furnish the only music, and the dancers perform their limited steps with faces utterly devoid of expression. But each muscle is a living, responsive thing, and ripples of move-



ment that begin at the toes will sweep the length of the body in a fascinating convulsion as smooth as an unbroken rolling wave.

These dances are exclusively for the benefit of the men. The spirits must content themselves with two additions to the growing ritual. The chicken heads that were severed the previous day are now hung on the little artificial palm trees the *ajaus* had planted, and the old warriors once more bring out the fresh human heads for a wild, barbaric dance in which they careen around the *kampong* holding the heads aloft and swinging their *mandaus* directly underneath the necks. Never is the blade swung over the head, for that might give the *mandau* spirit the wrong idea.

That night the chickens killed the day before are eaten as part of the feast. The *ajaus* can eat only the drum sticks and breasts, never the wings, which might encourage them to flight just when they were needed most to fight. They are very careful about such details even though it never does them any good. When it comes to flight one good imaginary spirit gives them more lift than a thousand chicken wings.

During this chicken dinner the *ajaus* are waited on hand and foot by the worshipful women, and the pressure of the enforced period of celibacy begins to show. The women do nothing to relieve the tension. They are little brown minxes, as deliberately provocative as it is possible for them to be, and in this respect they can do very well. The spirits have managed to put taboos on just about every human activity there is, but a Dyak girl who has set her cap for an *ajau* would knock down Bali Akang himself if he tried to put a



taboo on the stirrings of her heart. She knows what she wants.

Comes the fifth day, or *mendong daon koeko ame koeman nang keramen*, and the men and women are fit to be tied. The ceremony this day is a delicate one involving the paying of tribute to the *belawang* pole. The *belawang* pole is the center of all magic for the entire *kampung*, and no matter how potent might be the magic of the family poles in front of each long-house, plus the individual enchantments of various heads, herbs and ancestral stones, unless the *belawang* pole is rich in spiritual strength, the family magic means nothing. So on this fifth day the fresh heads are brought to the *belawang* pole, that their spiritual vigor might refresh the waning strength of the old pole and restore it to its pristine vitality.

All the palm leaves which have been used as plates by the feasting *ajaus*, and all the palm leaves which have been draped over the verandah rails are brought to the pole and rolled into bundles like old newspapers. In them live the spirits of food and shelter, and they will do much to make Bali Akang feel at home in the *belawang* pole. Some of the bundles are hoisted up on the *keramen* pole, one of the *belawang* pole's lesser satellites. A lot of gong pounding and disorganized dancing follows this ritual, and at the climax one of the *ajaus* takes the largest bundle and climbs through the rotting mess tied to the *belawang* pole to make his way to the top, where the bundle is securely lashed with tree-bark rope.

Taman Bit's *belawang* pole, being ready to fall down anyway, was in no condition to stand for such an ascent. He knew it and so did everybody else. Accordingly they viewed





Around the *belawang* pole revolves the life of the  
*kampung*.





*Mamat ulu*, the dread festival of the head-hunters. This flash-photo caused a riot that nearly ended disastrously.





*Ajaus at the mamat ulu festival.*





The vibrant beauty of this dancer's movements cannot be captured with still camera.



the approach of the climax with considerable apprehension. If the pole collapsed all their work was gone for nothing. Into this emergency I stepped with a remarkable lack of common sense, a rare gift of mine.

I looked around for Taman Kila, but apparently he sensed what I was up to and faded. So I sent Achmed, Wirio and the rest of my boys to cut some long, stout bamboo poles from a nearby clump. It was my intention to brace the *belawang* pole much as telephone linemen brace a telephone pole they are setting. Well, it worked until the *ajau* reached the top of the pole and tied his bundle. Then the crazy galoot had to pull some childish flourishes, waving his body around like an acrobat before an appreciative audience, while he kept his legs locked around the pole. Of course the rotten thing cracked. It started to topple in my direction.

Achmed and Wirio were both on my side pushing against their poles, and when the giant trunk started to wobble we really dug in and heaved. All of a sudden it dawned on us that if the *belawang* pole did collapse, the villagers would believe that we pushed it over. The unfortunate thing about it was that green bamboo, while being sufficiently strong, is covered with a thin, slippery fuzz, and furthermore it bristles at the joints with long, exceedingly sharp needles. In our desperate heaving match our hands naturally slipped on the fuzz and impaled themselves on the needles. That gave us a good grip. Nothing like having your hands impaled on needles when you want to keep a good hold. Kitjil and Admo had time to rush to our aid, and they managed to get their poles firmly into the tree with the butts planted into the ground when the crazy Dyak up the pole



decided it was time to fall off. He knocked Achmed and me flat on the way down, but at least the pole stayed up.

After that near-disaster I spent the rest of the day bracing the *belawang* pole with substantial supports. By night-fall I had the thing so propped up with bamboo braces there wasn't room for it to fall down even if it started. I wasn't taking any more chances after my initial scare. Dyaks who have just impregnated an old pole with the spirits of fresh heads are too apt to require more heads to impregnate a new pole should the old one fall down.

I didn't miss much in the way of ceremonies that day because there was very little going on after the *belawang* ceremony. More dancing, more sexual provocation, and more tall story telling, but in the main the afternoon was one of rest. The women had little to do but cook the rice for the meals and act as enticing as possible. The men, with nothing to do to take their minds off their bodily needs, were in a nervous, irritable state in which their responses to the women's overtures were exactly what the women wanted. The men were becoming dynamite looking for a place to explode.

The sixth day, *tei naho*, and the seventh day, *moko*, were more of the same. There was a procession to the *ladangs* in which the heads brought new vitality to the crops and spiritually enriched the soil for the next harvest. And there was another procession into the jungle for the benefit of the banana groves, the coconut palms, and all the game in the forest. And there was dancing.

Up to this point the dances had been traditional, stylized movements that have been in vogue for centuries and had



their origin in India and the Malay Peninsula. But now they became personal movements, utterly shameless in their suggestive rhythms. Men and women alike picked up the rhythms of the gongs and small drums. Now and then warriors up on the verandah would pick up the big clubs and set the huge log drums to roaring. They manipulated the giant drum sticks with a speed that made them almost invisible. Their arms moved with the snakelike snap of dexterous Indian club workers, and the low heavy roll that came from the hollow logs was like the moan of a lion that, while not exactly hungry, would just as soon hurry the meal along. The big drums never talked for any length of time. The short spurts were warming-up periods. Any continued barrage of sound from those compelling instruments would unleash a surge of passion that would sweep the *kampung* into homicidal frenzy. Red-eyed with repression, the warriors circled the women hungrily and glared at each other in inflamed jealousy. Every now and then a warrior driven beyond self-control, would explode into a group of dancers and begin a solo burst of wild dancing in which his whirling *mandau* would endanger the lives of all within reach. Such a warrior was believed to have been seized by the fighting Bali Akang spirit, and in the event someone should be killed by his blade it would be the spirit that was to blame, not the warrior.

The eighth day came, and I knew hell was going to break somewhere. All night long the *ajaus* sleeping on the verandah had talked and screamed in their sleep, a sign that the spirits were within them. The women inside the houses had slept but little. They were half afraid, half expectant, of



the passion they had evoked in their men. I kept Taman Kila, Wang Lo and Achmed with me in Taman Bit's house, all of us with loaded guns, while down in the guest house at the end of the *kampong*, Wirio, Kitjil and Admo guarded my supplies with their rifles. They were in the hut with Boi Djalong's boys, but I knew no trouble would start there. My Malays had a habit of dealing with trouble long before it ever got started, and the Dyaks knew it.

This eighth day was to be a day of rest and heavy feasting, for on the morrow the *mamat ulu* would end and with it would end all the taboos that kept the warriors from their wives and sweethearts. Another procession to the *ladangs* worked off some of the frustrated energy, but the rest of the day was spent around the rice pots. Men in groups on the verandah were fed by the women who kept running back and forth from cooking hearth to food bins to verandah. The jungle was called upon for fresh fruits, bananas, coconuts, sweet potatoes, sago, wild honey and palm sprouts. Meat and fish were thrown into the pots. The men ate until they could not stand. This was the real feast of the ceremony, and a repulsive affair it was. Good eating was not its object. The sole purpose was to get a bellyful, it did not matter of what.

After dark the big ceremonial dance took place on Taman Bit's brother-in-law's verandah. This was not a general dance but an exhibition by trained performers of both sexes. In preparation for this event I had set up my Graphic camera in advance and had focussed on a predetermined spot on the floor which I marked with chalk. Whenever a dancer touched the spot I knew he would be in focus and I could bang away with my flash powder. I knew motion pic-



tures in that dark interior were out of the question, but I wanted at least to get some stills.

The big drums began to boom in earnest as soon as the sun had set. No longer were the drummers merely a bunch of adult savages with juvenile minds delighting in making a big noise. They had passed that stage during the course of the festival, and now they were hypnotized by their own rhythms into the belief that they were the personified spirits of thunder, omnipotent demons exalted far beyond human limitations. Their heavy sticks poured a continuous barrage of brain-stunning drumfire into the hollow logs, and the sound that rolled out exploded as it struck the ear. Under this bombardment rational thinking processes were blown to bits.

An *ajau* drummer driven beyond endurance by his frenzy dropped where he stood, his still-flailing stick crashing into the crowd below the verandah. The thunder spirit had left him in favor of a stronger body. Another warrior felt the impact as the thunder spirit entered his soul. With face contorted beyond recognition, he made a flying leap over the verandah rail, landing on his feet on the ground twenty feet below. He retrieved the drum stick and was back on the verandah before he knew what he was doing. He fell upon the drum as though it were a living thing and he would murder it.

The pace was too furious to last, but the driving effect of unleashed sound upon the savage minds was something that would not fade. Though the drummers dropped out one by one, finally leaving no replacements suitable for the thunder spirit, the pitch of emotion aroused by the brutal reverberations caused the crowd to surge onto the verandah



for the dancing. Gongs picked up where the big drums had left off, and in the confined space beneath the rafters the brassy clanging was every bit as devastating as the heavy booming of the logs.

A fire smoldered on the hearth, filling the verandah with acrid fumes that burned the eyes. Resin flares added a faint light that was almost swallowed by the heavy black smoke they emitted, but it was enough to cast an eerie gleam on the cluster of skulls hanging from the ceiling. The three new heads occupied a position of prominence near the fireplace, and the Dyaks stared at them with gaping mouths as though momentarily expecting Bali Akang to materialize through the burned holes that had once been eyes.

The clock had been pushed back ten thousand years. With my eyes I was looking at a crowd of dirty, ignorant, superstitious Dyaks decked out in cheap calico rags, tencent store trinkets and imitation finery, but what I was seeing was a weird assembly of fighting men resurrected from the ancient past and dressed in all the barbaric splendor of a race devoted to symbolic pageantry. The men and women squatting on mats against the walls were by all objective standards a miserable, poverty-stricken lot who should be taken firmly in hand by a competent missionary, but that was yesterday or tomorrow. Tonight they were the reincarnation of a savage, lusty, man-eating, head-hunting, blood-loving bunch of Stone Age men who in their race through life had erupted into eternity.

It needed no psychic powers to tell me that trouble lay just under the surface. You could see it in the tenseness of the squatting crowd, hear it in the curtness of their mono-



syllabic speech, read it in the flickering glances of their red eyes. For more than a week they had been living on heroic tales of blood; they had fondled fresh heads and had danced to the rhythms of murder; they had been tantalized by provocative women and they had feasted well on rich foods. Their nerves were wound up to the snapping point, and the gongs were winding them tighter, tighter, tighter. It was time for the dancers to come on.

I was backed up in a corner with Wang Lo, Taman Kila and my Malays. The corner was of my own selection. In the first place, if we were rushed, we would have protection on two sides, and in the second place I could shoot my pictures without being shot at.

The first dancer was a woman, and she was pretty bad. She waddled over the thick planks, lifting her feet ponderously as if they were stuck in flypaper. I don't know why it is, but I always attend a native dance expecting to marvel at some mystic agility that is bred into the performers simply because they are savages. Always I am disillusioned. Some day I shall know better than to expect skilled dancers in every backwater village, but for the sake of my motion pictures I always keep on hoping.

The second dancer was an *ajau*, and he was crazy before he leaped to his feet. He had his *mandau* out, and there was red saliva on his lips. His first rush carried him to the middle of the floor. I thought he was coming right on into camp, and I hefted the substantial drum stick I had thoughtfully provided for such an emergency. But when he reached the center of the floor he stopped in a rigid pose while his muscles began to shake in spine-wrenching convulsions. The



spirits had seized him, and his muscles were fighting back. The red saliva became a bloody froth, and I could see his jaws working as he clamped his filed teeth over his tongue in an ecstasy of self-torture. Abruptly he fell to the floor, but his muscles continued to twitch as two old women dragged him away. They were the only ones who could touch him. Their age made them immune to evil spirits.

His place was taken by a young girl dressed in a richly brocaded sarong that covered her body from her armpits to her ankles. Her great clusters of earrings stretched her lobes to her shoulders, forcing her to dance with strange, stilted hops lest a sudden gyration tear the rings from her ears. In each hand she carried a cluster of tucan feathers which she manipulated much in the manner of a fan dancer. When she stepped into focus I opened the shutter and banged away with the first blast of flash powder. I nearly blew off the roof.

Well, I interrupted routine when I yanked the trigger on that flash. My little dancer passed out cold. The rest of the crowd passed out through the walls. It was their first experience with flash powder, and they thought old Belare, the spirit of lightning himself, had struck in their midst. When I walked to the railing to call them back there was not a soul in sight.

Considerably chagrined, but nonetheless satisfied at having taken a remarkable picture, I went back to help Wang Lo revive the girl, which we did with liberal doses of water. She was frightened green. It took Taman Kila and me nearly half an hour to calm her down enough to listen to reason, but in the end we convinced her that her dance was so enticing that old Belare had come in person to witness it



better. When this flattering information finally sank home, she ran outside shrieking with delight and managed to call back the celebrants for more of the same.

In a way, I had overdone it. Though timid about getting started again, the Dyaks gradually worked off their fears in the brassy din of the gongs. As dancer after dancer went through his paces unharmed they began to get cocky. After all, it was not every *kampung* privileged to have Belare visit them in person. Another *ajau* did his *mandau* dance, his whirling blade slashing perilously close to the heads of the spectators. He stomped his feet, shook his head, and flailed his arms. The spirits were in his body, but they could not take complete control. He was pounced upon during a lull and led outside to cool off. Another took his place.

This man was a wiry devil whose *mandau* bore a half a dozen clusters of human hair. He was dressed to kill, and it was evident by the way he came slashing into the open space that he had something like that in mind. There was a five-minute warming-up period in which he shadow-slashed his way around the floor, working his way closer and closer to me with each swing. I had my bat resting against my tripod, and I had my flash tray in my left hand. I wasn't frightened when he came out, but I became so when I saw what he was up to. The rest of the audience was too eager.

I doubt if anyone in Taman Bit's *kampung* would deliberately set out to murder me unless I gave him too many tempting opportunities, but under the spell of the dance such an accomplishment would not be murder. It would be the spirits committing the crime, not the dancer. And the whole crowd was eager to see a little spectral butchery. Maybe old Belare would return again to witness it.



Around he came again, closer this time. His blade whipped out to cut the air just beneath my camera before he danced on. Once more around. I saw this time that there was no point in fooling around any longer. I watched his feet. When he stepped on my mark on the floor I yanked the trigger on my flash powder.

There was one flash of activity then, so fast I had to reconstruct it afterward. The *ajau's* intentions were blasted by the brilliant light, but his body was moving too fast to be stopped. So was his arm swinging the *mandau*. And for one agonizing second after the flash everyone was completely blinded. Wang Lo, who had been standing at my shoulder with a gun, had stepped forward, apparently to parry the *mandau* thrust with the barrel, just as I fired the powder. His forward step carried him past me, just as the *ajau's* body crashed into the tripod. There was one horrible wail of Oriental terror and then ghastly silence.

Instinctively I had wrapped my arms and legs around the *ajau* as I went over on my back. Somehow the tripod got mixed up in the deal, and I stabbed my shin on one of the spikes. I thought I was killed. For about thirty seconds I lay there while all the fight went out of the *ajau*. At that I flung him aside and struggled through a whole mess of arms and legs to find Wang Lo. The howling that was going on was terrific, the Dyaks for some reason preferring to remain and howl than run away again. Fortunately they were too frightened to fight. I couldn't find Wang Lo. I found Achmed, and he rallied the rest with a shout that did much to quiet the Dyaks. But still no Wang Lo.

I thought now that he had been killed and his body



spirited away. At that moment I heard some Cantonese curses floating up through the hole in the floor reserved for purely functional purposes. It was Wang Lo all right, and a highly indignant cameraman he was. That his dignified yellow person should be ejected through a Dyak one-holer was an insult to his ancestors all the way back to Genghis Khan, and it didn't mean a damn to him that the floor had passed over his head just a thousandth of a second before the *mandau* blade. He was all for vengeance, and he told me so as we conversed earnestly through the privy hole.

Relations within the house were still pretty strained. I didn't want Wang Lo coming up alone to plow through that mob, neither did I want to send Achmed down to get him. Tempers were at a point where any division of our forces might be suicide. I solved the problem by dropping my flashlight to Wang Lo. With this glowering evil eye on his person he could walk anywhere in Borneo and be safe. He proved it a moment later by rejoining us in our corner, the whole crowd moving back in fearful respect as he waved the light around.

But the dance was definitely over. Still no one started for home. That was bad. If they kept hanging around, they might get more ideas. This time it was my Dyak genius, Taman Kila, who saved the situation. Acting on his own, he summoned Taman Bit over to our corner, and when that frightened old villain came shaking across the floor Taman Kila took him by the arm and began a confidential whisper. The response was instantaneous. Taman Bit nodded his head eagerly two or three times, and I saw him looking around out of the corners of his eyes. Once he licked his lips.



Taman Kila whispered some more and then gave Taman Bit a friendly shove in the direction of a terrified cluster of women.

That was the end of the crisis, but it was the beginning of the most violent display of mass passion I have ever been compelled to witness. What Taman Kila had told Taman Bit was nothing more than that it was midnight, and that the ninth day of *mamat ulu* had begun. The ninth day, ending the rigid taboos on sex. The ninth day, when the women are privileged to absorb the powerful spirits the warriors have accumulated as a result of their head-hunting.

Taman Bit paused in the middle of the floor to announce the arrival of *moko*. There was a hush, and then an electric moment of expectancy. The fears of a moment ago were lost in a surge of animal passion that was further strengthened by the tremendous spiritual significance of the occasion. Here was not a case of brutal men attacking frightened women. Here was a case of men and women meeting on an exalted level of overpowering, mutual desire.

Maybe the night was just a disgusting exhibition of unleashed lust. There are many who think so. And then again the Dyaks may find something sublimely elemental in their festival of *mamat ulu*. Blood, death, spirits and sex, the powerful essentials of primitive life, all mixed up together in a barbaric ritual that does not end until every person in the *kampung* achieves the ultimate of physical relief and spiritual satisfaction. When it is over, all desire is gone. No religion can do more.



## CHAPTER 12: ORANGUTAN

AS MIGHT have been expected, I was without the services of a crew for about a week after the conclusion of *mamat ulu*. Boi Djalong's boys had so completely entered into the festivities of Taman Bit's *kampong* that they were total wrecks for days. I spent the time sitting on my hands wondering what to do. Tamæn Bit's wife was a great help in relieving the tedium of the enforced wait. She knew about all there was to know about life in the Apo-Kajan, and because of her age she could not participate in the celebration as actively as her more youthful mind would like.

One of her delights was confiding in me some of the exploits of her youth. Dyak women, she boasted, were far more cruel and treacherous than the stupid men. In her girlhood, she said, she had once made love to a boy from the neighboring *kampong* for weeks just so she could lure him into the jungle for her brothers to kill. And when the butchery of her sweetheart did take place, she had with her own little hands cut off the fingers of the slain youth and used them for decorations on a new hat. Women, she assured me gravely, knew lots of tricks like that, and when it came to carving up a human body for a cannibalistic feast, only women knew how to select the choicest morsels.



Taman Bit's wife also told me of an interesting custom of making one head go a long way. In the present case, she pointed out, twenty-four men had come back with three heads, yet all were entitled to a skull by virtue of their presence at the hunt. Also each *ajau* was privileged to use the title *kamat* after his name to indicate his new status in life. But what about a head for his own fireplace to back up his new title? Very simple, she said. Two of the heads would be taken out and cracked into several pieces, and one piece given to each man who had been on the hunt. The third head would be preserved intact for Taman Bit's fireplace. Each *ajau* would then carve a head out of wood, and into it fit the piece of bone in the exact place it had occupied in the original skull. It was all perfectly legitimate, she assured me, the spirits recognizing the skull for full value as long as it had one genuine fragment in the right place.

Along about the eighth day after the *mamat ulu*, a lethargic, unrepentant crew staggered out of the fog of their excesses and wanted to crawl into their canoes and die. They were in no shape to start a long, arduous trip to Long Nawang, but on the other hand, if they stayed in the *kampung*, they never would be. In spite of its raggle-taggle appearance the town seemed to do all right for itself in the way of attractions as far as my crew was concerned. So I loaded them into the canoes and we started out.

It was good to get going again. The sweat and steam and stink of the jungle did much to clear away the fumes of our stay in town. At this point the Kajan River was flowing at about four miles an hour, and I will say this for my paddlers,



they managed to keep us with it. However, it was two days before our speed ever exceeded a slow drift.

It took us four days to get to Long Nawang, capital of the Apo-Kajan, and I must admit I was genuinely impressed. It is an amazing city. Of course it would be grossly unfair to compare it with a *kampung* on the coast, or even a backwoods town in Java, but considering that it was an exact duplicate of the *kampung* that had occupied the site two or three thousand years ago, the number of refinements was astounding. In other words, my admiration was for the *kampung* of the prehistoric past, not for the accomplishments of the present occupants who were doing only what their ancestors had done and nothing more.

Long Nawang has the longest street, the largest longhouses, the greatest packs of scavenger dogs and the most terrifying stink in all Borneo. The people are the proudest, tallest, strongest, best-dressed and most prosperous of any tribe. They put the ritz on my crew of hillbillies so decisively that I actually felt sorry for them even while I couldn't help recalling how they had joined forces in snubbing my boys from the Mahakam.

Our reception was not exactly the most cordial I have ever received. Neither was it hostile. Rather it was as if Rajah Lendjau Djok didn't mind having a white man in camp as long as he behaved himself. As for the presence of Wang Lo and my Malays, they too were as welcome as their behavior deserved. Boi Djalong's boys weren't worth bothering about one way or another. They could find an empty hut around somewhere for use during their stay. What the hell, Long Nawang had no laws against vagrancy.

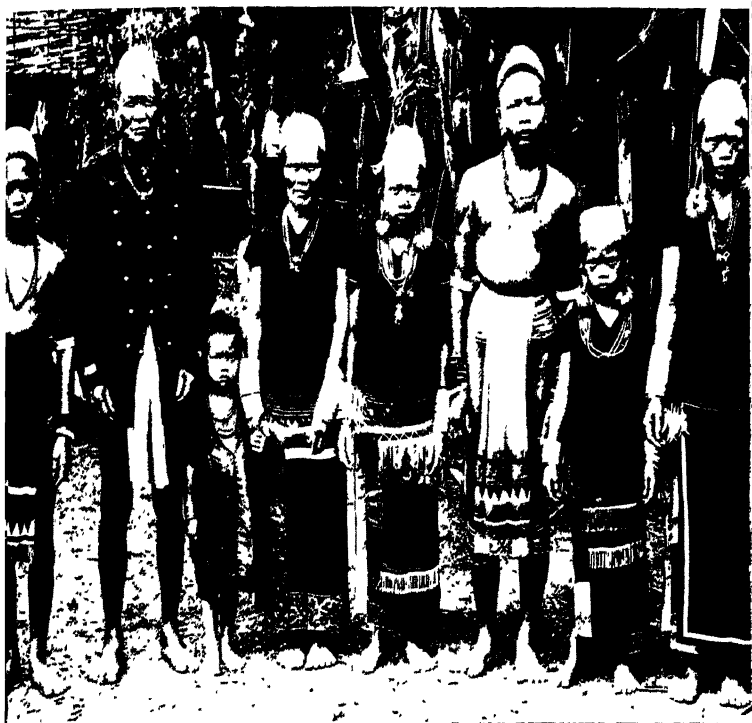


The rajah was a snooty old bird at first. He was down on the bank of the river when we landed, but refused to have anything to do with us until we had removed our excess evil spirits by a walk around the *belawang* pole. It was quite a pole, too, rich in rotten eggs, chicken heads, ceremonial leaves and a couple of bundles of palm leaves not yet thoroughly dried out. Apparently *mamat ulu* had been observed here recently too. The pole was exceptional, also, in that it had *belawang* poles carved on the *belawang* pole, and in addition there were several lesser poles stuck up to help the big one keep all its spirits in line.

Though Lendjau Djok had heard from messengers that I was not a government man on a punitive expedition, he was nonetheless wary about inviting me into his own home. He had recently been visited by a white army officer and a crew of Malayan soldiers, and had had all his nice heads confiscated. No greater tragedy had ever befallen a Dyak. It was a wonder the *kampong* survived the loss at all. And since it was evident that he had repaired the loss as soon as possible by lopping off some more heads, he was darned if he was going to invite me in to confiscate the fresh batch. Heads were too hard to get to be passing them out to every white man who happened to come along.

He did, however, invite me to occupy a guest chamber immediately adjoining his, and when I moved my personal crew in we were accorded all the courtesies of honored guests. We didn't even have to do our own cooking. He was most co-operative, too, in the matter of pictures, and when I suggested that I would like to film a hunting expedition he





Rajah Lendjau Djok poses with his family. His military coat is a gift from the Dutch Government, worn as a sign of authority.





*Dajoengs* of Long Nawang are the interpreters of omens, *adats* and spirit voices. The third from the right, with the basket headdress and flagrant avowal of celibacy, was my guide on the trek to the land of stone men.



said he would be glad to oblige as soon as the omens were favorable.

It took me about three days to convince Lendjau Djok that I was not up there to reform his morals or put a crimp in his head-hunting. His experience with white men had been pretty bitter. Every time tales of head-hunting in the Apo-Kajan reached the coast, a punitive expedition headed for his *kampong*. It didn't matter to the army officers whether the so-called atrocities had been committed by his men or by the Dyaks in some remote *kampong* back in the mountains. Long Nawang was the biggest town in the valley and the easiest to reach, so he was the one punished. To hear him tell it you would think he had been over-run by white hordes. Actually three government expeditions in five years, each one headed by a lone white man, had managed to reach Long Nawang. Two had stayed for as long as six weeks before Lendjau Djok had managed to persuade them that he was as innocent as a baby, and even then they had taken all his heads away before they would believe him. As soon as their backs were turned he went out for more.

I was not bored waiting around Long Nawang for the omens to favor a hunting trip. There was something going on all the time in this brilliantly colorful city, and if the people preferred to sleep in the sun, the tame monkeys and colorful birds kept things moving. Nasty-tempered hunting dogs dozed under the houses, and pounced savagely on any slops poured through the privy hole from the floor above.

Barbers opened up shop on the street wherever they found patrons sleepy enough to sit still. A shave and a hair cut was an ordeal equal to a Chinese death of a thousand



cuts. For equipment these modern tonsorial artists had a pair of tweezers and a more or less sharp knife. Shaves were dry. Fortunately the Dyak is not cursed with a heavy beard or the race would have been killed off by barbers centuries ago.

The barber usually discovered after a few minutes of patient hacking that the best way to administer a shave was to saw the beard off slightly below the surface of the skin where the roots were soft. A hair cut, on the other hand, was practically painless. The Long Nawang fashion was to cut the hair in a page-boy bob. To this end the barber would place the hair on a block of wood, measure off the desired length, and hit it with his knife as if he were cutting wood on a chopping block. The severed hair was saved for its spiritual content. To complete their toilet, both men and women have their eyebrows and eyelashes plucked with brass tweezers. The Dyak detests hairiness to such an extent that the women have their armpits plucked and in their anxiety to please their men folks and to show off their tattoo designs better, they also have their pubic regions plucked. Not only that, but they laugh and chatter while the torture is going on.

The hunt Lendjau Djok was planning turned out to be no trivial affair. As long as he was backed up by my rifles he was going out for everything in the jungle from pheasant to *lembu*, panther and orangutan. For that he needed better than average omens, so it was a week before a sufficient number of *plakis*, *kihings* and *taladjang* birds flew over in the right directions. Snakes were also consulted, as were spiders, roaches, fleas and the way the smoke blew at night.



In the meantime the hunters made blowgun darts, and brewed tarry poisons such as *tasem* and *ipoe* with which to tip the darts. The collar of the dart against which the breath was blown was made of pith taken from the center of a thick water reed and shaped to fit the hollow interior of the blowgun. It was light in weight and furnished a far snugger fit than feathers. Different darts and poisons were prepared for different types of game, the small fry requiring a short, light dart tipped with mild poison while such prey as panthers were favored with long, multi-pointed darts, saturated with *ipoe*, the most virulent poison known. These panthers, incidentally, were more on the order of miniature tigers than panthers such as we know them in this country. Undoubtedly they could trace their ancestry back to the Bengals when Borneo was attached to the Malay Peninsula. Pleasant creatures, and you could bet your last dollar that if a Dyak killed one it was not because he was out looking for it. More likely the panther was out looking for him and it was a case of the Dyak or the panther. Most usually it was the Dyak.

Because of the constant attention to omens, I had by this time reached the point where I never actually planned to do anything until I was already half done with it. So it was with the hunting trip. I saw all the darts and nets and snares being prepared, but not until we were several miles into the jungle did I really dare to believe we were actually on our way. Wang Lo trotted along as usual with the spare camera, while Taman Kila, Achmed and his Malays carried the guns. I wore my pistol and carried an Eyemo.

With us, under the personal leadership of Lendjau Djok



and his son, were about eighty Dyaks, including some of Boi Djalong's boys who were condescendingly permitted to carry most of the supplies. There was a lot of blowgunning and retrieving of darts going on up ahead but I never saw anything being hit. The world's worst hunters, I swear. If it wasn't for the pack of dogs ranging the woods on either side, it is doubtful if even a pheasant with a chronic case of jitters would have been frightened away by that mob of incompetent marksmen. The dogs were the real hunters. They knew their business. On top of that, if a Dyak became too disgruntled at his poor marksmanship, he could always whistle up a dog and shoot him. Dog meat is always good.

After hiking along about four hours, making remarkably good time in spite of the size of our party, we came to a spot that must have been the favorite hunting ground for Long Nawang for centuries. Traces of old fences could still be seen here and there in the underbrush, but because this was to be something big in the way of a hunt, Lendjau Djok decided it was worth a new fence. Accordingly, the rest of the day was spent in loosely weaving a couple of hundred yards of fence from lianas, bamboo, palm fronds and anything else that could be hacked off with a *mandau* without too much effort. The fence extended from one ridge, down into a valley and up to the crest of the opposite ridge. Here and there artful little openings were worked into the fence, and around these holes were rigged spring snares attached to a bent sapling. Any movement of the spring would release the sapling, and it would flip sky-high whatever was in the snare. There were larger openings in which were set snares large enough to strangle a deer or a small wild pig, always pro-



viding, of course, that the pig or deer would be obliging enough to stick its neck into the noose instead of leaping over or plowing through the barricade. Personally I've never seen a deer caught in this manner, but the Dyaks claim it can be done. Considering their natural aptitude for lying, it is my opinion that anyone who will believe such claims will believe anything.

While most of the boys were engaged in piling brush, another group equipped with adzes and wooden shovels was busy digging three pitfalls about seven feet square at the top and eight feet deep. These were situated in the game trails at the bottom of the valley, and were intended for the capture of wild cattle, black bears, wild boars and anything else that would jump in. The excavated dirt was carried away in improvised palm baskets and scattered in the jungle. When completed, the pit was cleverly covered with bamboo poles, dead leaves and lianas. The general idea was that the Dyak hunters would scare up a *lembu* and drive it down the valley until it fell into a pit. I'm not saying a *lembu* wouldn't fall in if properly urged, but I will say there is not a Dyak in Borneo who will get close enough to a *lembu* to urge it. As hunters of big game, they show their greatest proficiency in hunting for a high tree from which to view the big game as it goes by.

By the time the fence was built and the pits dug, it was almost dark. Accordingly, our whole party marched about a mile and a half up the valley to an open, fern-banked glen where camp was made for the night. It was one of those wonderful glens you sometimes encounter in the deep jungle: a smooth, moss-covered park surrounded by every



conceivable form of tropical vegetation that rose tier on tier over the bluffs on both sides. And crawling over everything were a thousand varieties of flowers. A kapok tree caught the setting sun like a frosted snowman, its mantle of fluffy white cotton balls piling up the dark green slope in a huge drift. Trees with brilliant orange and yellow blossoms scented the thick air with a cloying sweetness that would have been noxious were it not for the rich rancidity of the other odors.

And orchids. No greenhouse display could ever provide a more concentrated exhibit than did the south wall of that valley. No botanist myself, I could only sit and admire while the rest of the boys waded into the priceless collection to yank out branches of dry wood for the fires. There were giant orchids draped from branches fifty feet up, with purple blossoms hanging in festoons almost to the ground. There were yellow claw-lipped orchids whose throats were lined with scarlet, and tiny blue orchids whose delicate petals were no larger than violets. As if that were not enough, there were hundreds of other plants vying in the competition for color predominance. Flowers blossomed out of bark, out of stems, out of fruit, out of backs of leaves, and some, lacking imagination, just bloomed away on stems like ordinary plants.

In a valley like that it is peaceful even when occupied by eighty of the most vicious head-hunters on the island, along with about sixty equally vicious dogs. The smoke from the fires rose to the height of the hills and settled there in a hazy layer that enhanced the enchantment of the sunset. I had time to rest, time to think on the restful thought that



I had nothing to think about, and time to look over my royal crew of cutthroats. A nice bunch of superstitious hillbillies. All the wisdom of countless generations to make them cunning and dangerous, and all the appalling ignorance of minds closed by *adat* to the introduction of new ideas. I could see one toss a stick of wood on the fire and spit after it to mollify the stick's spirit. Another stirred rice in a clay pot three turns to the right, three turns to the left, because it was his peculiar belief that the spirits of left and right should be treated equally. He was ambidextrous, and wanted to stay that way. Another had his fire all to himself where he cooked a vegetarian dinner. He, I learned, was the son of a warrior who had been killed and eaten by a panther. The panther, in the course of its carnivorous career, had likewise killed and eaten about every conceivable form of meat, so this boy, out of respect for his father's digestive companions, wasn't having any. He didn't even want to get in the smoke of broiling meat.

The connection may be a little vague, but there are whole tribes in Borneo who will not touch deer meat, others that will not eat *lembru*, and still others who refuse to touch wild pigs. These taboos on various forms of meat can be traced to the same agencies that brought the stone idols to the heart of Borneo. The nucleus of the great Oriental religions of Mohammedanism, Judaism, Buddhism and Christianity could very well have swept over Borneo during the Eastward Drift, and been preserved as *adats*.

One thing about a Dyak in the jungle: he fits right into it. At home he may be a lazy lout, but once he gets into the brush his appearance begins to improve. I couldn't help but



admire the bunch sitting around the fires after dark even though I knew every one of them was bending at least half an ear in the direction of the jungle to catch the first faint footfall of a ghost. Stripped down for the hunt, each one became a handsome fighting machine of bare flesh and close-fitting equipment. It is not the uniform but the way it's worn that makes the warrior anyway, and these boys wore what little they had with considerable verve. After all, they were Long Nawang Dyaks, than which there are no greater. Each one wore his hunting *mandau* and *njoe* (the small knife that fits into the *mandau* scabbard) on his belt. A small cylinder of bamboo held his poisoned darts, and this likewise fastened on the belt, opposite the *mandau*, along with a small container of hard, resinlike poison. And right beside him, never more than three feet away, were his blow-gun, spear and wooden shield. Some also carried a twenty-foot coil of rope woven out of tree-bark or palm fiber.

These articles are all that are employed in the actual hunt, but no Dyak would ever think of stirring one foot from his *kampong* without his charms. These he carries all over his body, on straps across his chest, on anklets, necklaces, earrings, headdresses, bracelets and even in holes bored in his teeth, not to mention the penis ring. The most potent of these charms is a rooster's egg. It is believed that every rooster lays one egg, usually a soft-shelled one consisting of little more than yolk. Often a young pullet, laying for the first time, will produce such an egg, but the Dyaks prefer to believe a rooster did it. When found it is wrapped very carefully in kapok fluff and carried in a bamboo container worn around the neck or on the belt with the darts.



Its value increases with age, and some of the eggs have been kept in the family for two or three generations.

Two more containers complete the hunter's uniform. One holds his tinder, the other holds his tobacco and betel nut. All these various appurtenances are decorated with tassels, beads, and intricate carvings. Such items as are actually used on the hunt can be made only by the men, because if a woman were to do the carving on a *mandau* or spear her weak spirit might render the weapon impotent. She can, however, do the bead work on a tobacco container or tinder tube. Achmed and Kitjil, but a few years removed from the swamps themselves, thought the whole setup was a lot of monkey business, and when they said monkey business they had apes in mind.

Our hunt began shortly before sunrise, at a time when the birds were making the dawn particularly hideous with cawing. We didn't eat breakfast, Lendjau Djok confidently expecting to have fresh meat to feast on later in the morning. He knew from past experience that it was very doubtful if we would kill anything, but he insisted that this time the omens were better than average. So convinced was he that he sent twenty men down to the snares to pick up the game already caught and to reset them for the influx to come. The twenty were then to climb trees and with their blowguns pick off anything chased in their direction.

For the best possible pictures, I had Wang Lo stick with the beaters and dogs while I went down the valley with the twenty selected to await the coming of the drive. Achmed and Kitjil accompanied me; Admo and Wirio stayed right in back of Wang Lo. It wasn't that we didn't trust our hosts,



which we didn't, but it was because we didn't trust their omens. We never could tell at what moment some bird or other might come streaking across the sky in a perfect high sign for the knocking off of a white man, a Malay or a Chinese.

Those of us going down the valley went swiftly, silently and in a single file so as not to disturb the game prowling in the underbrush. The dogs would scare them up later on. We came to the first pitfall, and to my intense amazement it looked as if it had an occupant. The top was caved in, and the brush that had covered it was scattered all over the place. Instantly the Dyaks swarmed into the trees, shouting shrilly for me to do likewise. It didn't matter to them that if any animal was in the pit, it was in there to stay. As long as it was still breathing, if it was, it was too dangerous to be tackled at close hand, hole or no hole. They went up into the lower branches and made their way monkey-like from limb to limb until they were over the pitfall. I covered the scene from fifty feet with my camera while Achmed covered me, just in case something monstrous should leap out.

Nothing did. I could see from the expressions of relief on the faces of the hunters in the trees that whatever had been in there had tired of the place and gone its way. They started dropping down as I moved up, landing silently and with their hands on their *mandaus* as if they expected the creature to come charging back to leap into the hole again. A couple of the braver souls stalked the empty pit, still taking no chances. And when they got to the lip, their excitement let it be known that their caution was justified. Orang-utan! The great ape! The golden man of the forest!



I rushed up as excited as the rest of the boys. All during my trip I had been on the lookout for an orangutan, somehow feeling that if I couldn't get one on at least a few feet of film I wouldn't have a true picture of Borneo.

He had been there all right. His footprints and hand prints were all over the place, inside the pit and out. And he had wrecked the joint. The bamboo poles that had covered the hole were literally shredded. Tough, stringy lianas were torn into fragments and hurled as much as twenty feet away. Apparently the ape had watched the construction of the pitfall from some nearby place of concealment, and had taken it apart to see what it was for.

The reaction of the Dyaks was baffling. They were scared to death, and at the same time were burning with a furious desire to catch the beast. They wanted to run three different ways at once; back to camp, ahead to the barricade, and up the slope in the direction of the departing footprints. They couldn't have shown more excitement if they had come upon a strange human being lost in the brush, except that in the case of a human being they would have instantly fallen upon him and removed his head. In the case of the orangutan, they had too much respect for its long, powerful arms to want to come to grips, but at the same time they did want its head. A fresh orangutan head is every bit as powerful spiritually as a human head. In fact, Bali Akang gives greater credit to a warrior for bringing in an ape skull than a human head because he knows the ape will always fight while the human will always run away if given a chance.

In the end we went on to the brush fence, hoping against hope that the drive would turn up the forest man as a target



for the blowguns. They knew, and I knew, that if the big ape did show up, every hunter in the lot would run as he had never run before, but just the same, each one had to show his brother hunters he was not afraid by brandishing his spear and blowgun as if he had every intention in the world of using it. As an additional precaution, they opened their containers of heavy darts tipped with *ipoe* poison, the most virulent poison in the Dyak recipe book. Unlike the smaller darts, these were barbed so they would stay in long enough for the poison to dissolve into the blood and the pith collar was shaped in the form of a skull. A man with good lungs could puff one of them a distance of a hundred feet with fair accuracy, but beyond that distance it had no penetrating power whatever owing to its tricky trajectory. Its light weight sharply reduced its momentum, and its bulky collar offered too much air resistance. It shot straight and true as far as the puff would carry it, after which it dropped straight down like a thrown feather.

At the suggestion of Lendjau Djok's son, we all climbed trees above the fence, selecting our perches about thirty feet apart so the whole line would be covered. I picked a roost at the bottom of the valley where the greatest action was expected. Then Achmed, Wirio and I set about cutting down branches that obscured our visibility. If by some chance the drive was successful, I didn't want to be caught behind a barrier of leaves through which my camera could catch only fragmentary glimpses. When I think of all the trees I've cut down, and the brush I've cleared away just to get the right camera angles . . .

Strangely enough, the drive was about as successful an



event as a cameraman could ask for. Shortly after noon a flock of argus pheasants with two-foot tail feathers came slinking through the underbrush, their iridescent necks gleaming as they poked their heads through the lianas. One stuck its head into a snare and was snatched into the air. A Dyak sitting directly above the trap nearly fell out of the tree in surprise that something he had built really worked.

Next came red-tufted wild chickens and green partridges, jerking and poking uneasily because in their timidity they kept so far ahead of danger they never could be exactly sure there was any real danger at all. Phtt, phtt, phtt. The boys were working their blowguns and light darts. They were not doing too well, but every once in a while a chicken would keel over as if with the pip, and after a few convulsive movements of its feet it would lie still.

Monkeys began to drift our way, and at about our level. Once I found myself face to face with a proboscis monkey who stared at me intently before vanishing into the upper levels with an expression of unutterable horror on his face. No doubt he thought I was an albino of the species, and consequently something to be shunned.

Up the slope there was a disturbance and then I saw a Dyak fall out of his tree as if stunned. He landed on his head, but an instant later he scooted beneath me as if pursued by every haunt in the forest. I caught the smell then. Unmistakable. He had been gassed off his perch by a skunk monkey, as violently offensive a stinker as there is in the world. One blast from a skunk monkey would blanch a polecat. Considering what a Dyak himself can muster in the way of smell, it is obvious that nothing short of the



fumes of hell could ever disturb his olfactory nerves, but that tiny skunk monkey, no larger than an alley cat, not only stunned this man's nostrils but knocked him right out of the tree. What a scent! It made me sick, and I was the victim of but a transient whiff. The poor victim was unwelcome all the way along the line, and at last had to take refuge in a tree all by himself, on the downwind side.

By that time things were really beginning to move our way. In the distance I could hear the dogs and beaters pounding gongs and beating the flat side of their wooden shields. Birds began to drift overhead. Tucans, hawks, spider hunters, crows and pigeons flew up at the disturbance and circled aimlessly. Underneath was a regular procession of small game—quail, weasels, lizards, civet cats (almost as offensive in smell as the skunk monkey) and tiny deer—headed down the valley. Every now and then a snare would pop up with some struggling creature in its noose, but most of them snapped up empty when sprung. Deer went over the barricade; lesser creatures filtered through. Even so, I could see that the idea behind the fence was intrinsically sound, and probably worked out very well when the originators first put it into effect. With these boys it is doubtful if they knew why the fence was built other than that it was *adat*, so they didn't build it carefully enough to make it effective. They were, however, doing fairly well with their blowguns. Game was coming along now so thickly they could hardly miss.

Whenever they missed a shot, which was most of the time, it was because the spirits were either against them or in favor of their quarry; if they hit, it was only because of their own exceptional skill. In the excitement of the mass



slaughter they so forgot their habitual fears as to bawl the hell out of the spirits who were causing them to miss so frequently. They let the invisible directors of their destinies know in no uncertain terms that they didn't think much of the way they did business.

A wild boar came trotting down the game trail ahead of the beaters, pausing insolently every now and then as if debating whether or not to keep going or go back and take out a few men. Here was no cumbersome hog waddling from side to side. This streamlined beast was built with all the gaunt legginess of a greyhound, and aside from his ponderous jowls and head he was stripped for speed. He had it, too. A rangy dog whose legs were faster than its brain came yapping up, foolishly expecting to make a kill. The boar wheeled on a dime, charged while still whirling, and the dog exploded in a cloud of entrails. After that the hog leisurely wiped his tusks on the trunk of a tree, tearing off a slab of bark and moss, and then cantered through the barricade as if it weren't there.

A cow, a calf and a tough old bull came next, the bull leading the way while the calf anxiously kept running into its mother's legs while it tried to keep track of what was going on behind. When the old bull reached the pitfall, he snorted once, and then plowed a path through the dense underbrush on the side. On he came, lianas dangling from his great horns. Every Dyak within blowgun range began puffing away with no appreciable results. The old boy passed directly beneath me, the hunters above me on both sides of the valley still puffing away. The limb I was sitting on began to bristle with darts. My fanny suddenly felt a mile wide, but fortunately it failed to assume the aspects of a pin



cushion. Just one dart in the rear and I would have dropped out of the tree a dead pigeon. Those Dyaks are careless about little details like that.

It was impossible that the bull and his two charges could pass through that barrage unpricked, but if they were hit they showed no sign. And no Dyak was going to take a chance following them just to find out. A *lembu*, even a sick one, is not exactly the kind of playfellow the Dyaks care to romp with. Better to let him wander on to die by himself than track him down only to discover that by some grievous error he was still alive and kicking.

Right behind the wild cattle, but at a respectful distance, came the hounds, belligerently tackling everything not large enough to fight back. A scaly anteater wandered droopily along, undisturbed by the hounds clamped onto its hide wherever they could find a jaw hold. A lizard four feet long, resembling a grossly elongated horned toad, scuttled through the brush hissing and threshing its heavy tail while a dozen dogs snarled at its flanks. One of the beaters came rushing up and pinned the reptile to the ground with a powerful spear thrust. And that about ended the hunt. A few misguided mutts pounced on the game slain by darts and promptly expired when the sharp points pierced their mouths, but the Dyaks count on that. It adds bulk to the pile of fresh meat.

All told, we had reaped a surprisingly good harvest. A half a dozen small deer, fifty or sixty chickens and pheasants, some partridge, and a litter of suckling pigs scared up by the beaters. And I had about two thousand feet of good film.



There was no sign of the orangutan. Just in case the beast might still be in the neighborhood, Landjau Djok decided to stay over one more day. In the heat the game might not keep so well, but if it ripened a little over night it would only add more zest to the broiled product. We decided to return to our glen for the night, and the next morning make a stalking drive up the valley. In a stalking drive the hunters spread out over a wide area and sneak through the brush potting whatever they come upon as soon as they see it instead of trying to drive it to a predesignated spot. For this purpose the dogs were not needed. To get them to go home a deer was gutted and pulled over the trail to Long Nawang by two men. The dogs followed, snarling.

It was about four in the afternoon when we reached the site of our previous camp, and even to my untrained eye it was not as we left it. Ashes from the various fires were scattered all over, and a pile of dry wood that had been left in the center of the clearing was now tossed up into the trees. Big stuff, too. Limbs ten feet long had been thrown like twigs. Plainly the work of an orangutan, and huge palm prints in the ash piles quickly verified this. The golden boy of the forest had visited camp during our absence and found it not to his liking.

For Dyaks anxious to kill or capture such a creature, the boys showed no particular delight at the closeness of their quarry. Only in groups of eight or ten would they venture into the brush for dry wood, even though they had the enticing prospect of all the fresh meat they could eat for supper.



Those who remained in the center of the clearing, busy-ing themselves with the fires I obligingly started with my magic matches, were just as apprehensive as those closest to the jungle wall. Every ten seconds or so they would turn to look behind them, just in case the ape might be sneaking through the cordon of guards. It wasn't that they distrusted their lookouts; it was that they feared the ape more. In the face of this fear their action on the morrow was all the more incredible.

We went to sleep that night with considerable trepidation. Everyone, myself included, had the eerie sensation of being watched. There was no moon. The night was so black the stars were muffled and the bright flames of the fire were pressed back into the coals without illuminating the dark skins of the uneasy Dyaks. Only their eyes gleamed whitely, visible flashes of fear that became so evident, they were afraid to look at each other. Each man became a separate world to himself, isolated from the others by a wall of nameless dread.

Even without the ghosts that were adding to the terrors of the Dyaks, I was doing all right myself in the way of working up a cold sweat. So was Wang Lo. Only the Malays seemed impervious to the uncanny feeling of some malignant presence. When a heavy twig snapped back in the brush, everyone started nervously, but Achmed leisurely shifted his rifle to the other arm and spit out a quid of betel-nut juice. If hell broke loose and the devil popped out of the hole, that crazy Achmed would have taken a shot at him just to see what made him tick.

Most of the night the Dyaks sat around their fires tell-



ing lies to bolster what they flatteringly called their courage, and nursing their few sticks of wood along so they would not have to journey into the brush for more fuel. I know that along about midnight I became tired of feeling scared and went to sleep, much to the relief of ten million flies and mosquitoes who had been buzzing around my head waiting for me to quiet down. I woke up just before dawn, my face swollen and lumpy from insect bites, but feeling much better anyway. Wang Lo forced open his swollen lids and grinned.

"One hell bad night," he observed.

"Worse," I agreed. Dawn has always been the bad part of the day for me. The majesty of the tropical sunrise may be impressive stuff, but I don't know how anyone coming weakly out of a stupor is going to know about it. As for deliberately getting up before dawn just to see a sunrise—anybody who will do that will behead paper dolls. I staggered around in my canvas shoes getting the kinks out of my clothes. My shirt had crawled up around my neck and applied a tourniquet to my Adam's apple; my pants had cut the circulation to my legs and my left arm was numb from sleeping on it. In this hopeless condition, lurching half-way through a yawn, I looked directly into the eyes of the great ape. I woke up then with one violent jolt that snapped my hair on end.

The golden one was staring at me intently from the bough of a tree not sixty feet away, squatting on his heels and rocking back and forth as if dumbfounded by what he saw. When he saw I had noticed him he looked straight into my eyes and half-way through me, so penetrating was his



glance. No human being has ever scrutinized me so minutely. Wang Lo looked to see what was wrong with me, and then he saw the ape. Then I had to look to see what was wrong with Wang Lo.

Most of the time in the jungle I expect to run into wild animals without benefit of a set of steel bars between me and them. I know beforehand that any encounters will be face to face, and so am mentally prepared, but in this case I was achingly conscious of the fact that the orangutan was definitely at large and only a hop, skip and a jump away. I still remember a trace of indignation that the government let such creatures wander away from their cages. He belonged behind bars and he wasn't there. I felt almost naked in my insecurity. At that moment I was just an animal faced by another beast whom I knew to be my superior in strength, speed and aggressiveness. Any smug knowledge that the human race is superior to the ape vanished in the all-too-evident fact that if the ape wanted to leap out of the tree and attack me, I would be just a few gory stains in the moss.

He didn't leap at that particular time. If he had, tragedy might have been averted.

The camp behind me began to wake up, and even the guards who were supposed to warn us of danger now became aware of the silent visitor. The ape, uneasy under the stares of so many people, shuffled sideways along the bough, swung easily around the trunk, and leaped into nothing. He just vanished, nor was there a sound to mark his passage.

An amazing thing happened now. The ape had been seen—he was no longer an invisible menace—so the Dyaks began to feel they had frightened him away. Not only that,



but they began to think that after all he wasn't so big—only about five feet tall and weighing not much more than two hundred and fifty pounds—and there were eighty hunters. With the odds eighty to one, the feeling started to grow that maybe they ought to "get" the beast.

In view of the fact that they had returned to camp with the deliberate intention of hunting the ape, some of this may sound contradictory but it is easy to explain. The psychology of the Dyak hunter is such that he will hunt anything that walks, crawls or flies as long as there is no possibility of catching it. In order to feed his ego, he will take up the trail of an orangutan and follow it indefatigably until the trail becomes warm. Then he scuttles home at great rate, and for the next few weeks makes his presence unbearable with tales of how he matched wits with the golden ape. These eighty hunters of Long Nawang, the cream of the crop, had had no intentions of really catching an orangutan; they were merely going to hunt for it. But now, suddenly, they began to yearn for a real orangutan skull. Fresh magic for the *kampong*, and the foundation for countless tall tales.

It developed then that in spite of their stories to the contrary, it had been so long since a Kenja-Dyak had killed an ape they had no idea how it was done. While they were debating the issue the ape returned to his perch to resume his observations. Instantly everyone on that side of the clearing vacated. A pile of fresh bananas attracted the golden one's attention and, scornful of our presence, he dropped down and began breakfast.

I picked up my camera and started grinding. Wang Lo sidled around to get a head-on shot, and Kitjil and Admo



followed with rifles. At this Lendjau Djok took heart. Without being too flattering I will say this for the old rajah, they don't make them any braver in Borneo than he is. Following Wang Lo with a stalk of bananas, he tossed the bait in the direction of the ape and then scurried back to his hunters. He talked excitedly, even vehemently. I stopped grinding long enough to learn that he was urging his men with ropes to see what they could do about getting a line on the golden boy. While no experts on tossing a noose, they could manage to make a catch on a still post about seven times out of ten. The men didn't seem to take too kindly to the idea, but neither did they like being where they were. After all, that ape was loose.

Achmed lifted his rifle suggestively, but at this Lendjau Djok threw up his hands in horror. An ape killed with a rifle was absolutely valueless as magic. Gunpowder not only killed the ape, but it was so powerful it killed the spirit too. However, Achmed's gesture reassured the rest of the hunters. If it developed that they couldn't kill the ape, and it looked instead as if the ape were going to kill a few of them, our thunder magic would come to the rescue. A half-dozen men with ropes began circling to the left, another group to the right, while a third, led by the rajah himself, went up into the trees to see if they could get above their quarry. I began to have some hope that the plan would work. Achmed and Admo, however, never let the orangutan out of their sights. They had no more confidence in the Dyaks than they did in the spiritual potency of a rotten egg.

The principal actor in this jungle glen drama was the



most unconcerned of all. He moved around the clearing, taking care not to get more than a jump away from the jungle wall but otherwise refusing to regard us as a serious menace. He was the most curious beast I have ever seen. A shield deserted by a hunter who had more confidence in his speed than in his ability to hold off an ape at close quarters caught the orangutan's attention. He picked it up, looked around at the barricade of shields confronting him, and decided the whole thing was silly. He crushed it into matchwood with an effortless hug. A lot of confidence, of which they had none to spare, went out of the boys at this demonstration of strength.

Up in the trees Lendjau Djok and his boys were working closer. There was something more apelike in their stealth than in the movements of the ape himself. They were pretty good at the hand-over-hand tactics, even while trailing blowguns and rope over their shoulders. When it became evident that they were not going to be able to get over their quarry, I picked up a ripe durian and some bananas and piled them on the ground beneath the leafy limb on which the rajah was fairly well concealed. You can bet Achmed and Admo had me covered during this little feeding episode. I belong to the "bring *me* back alive" school of explorers.

During this display of insured bravery on my part the orangutan never once took his gaze off me. He didn't seem suspicious of my offering; he just didn't think suspicion was necessary. He was doing all right by himself. It was his curiosity that finally compelled him to look over the gift of fruit. He shambled over nonchalantly, knuckling the ground



with his long arms occasionally, but keeping a pretty upright stance for all that. A proud, handsome beast he was, and I knew he was registering well in the camera. That glinting, reddish-gold hide of his in contrast to the black and green wall of the jungle would come out beautifully. I'd have sold my soul for color film at that moment. Wang Lo, I noticed, should be getting some swell stuff, if he hadn't run out of film.

When things happen, they come fast.

The ape picked up a banana without stooping, but for one second both hands were engaged with the stalk. Lendjau Djok dropped his noose and yanked. He had six men on that rope, and they lifted the beast three feet off the ground. He was caught fair around the neck. Wang Lo stepped in fast for a close-up.

What chilled me was the unconcern of the golden one. No strangling, choking cries from his throat. No wild threshing against the noose. Calmly, as though he was accustomed to doing it every day, he reached over his head, grasped the rope and went up hand over hand. The Dyaks had not expected this. Screaming in terror they let the rope go, and three of them went over backwards. Men and ape crashed in a heap at Wang Lo's feet.

I know how he must have felt. A cameraman with his eye glued to the finder sees nothing but what is in his limited field. When that ball of fury dropped at his feet he was as totally unprepared for it as if it had come from another world.

His reaction was purely instinctive. He grasped the camera by the wrist strap and swung. He missed and never



had another chance. I saw the ape's arm flash in a high arc, heard the awful thump as of a crushed keg, and a severed scream.

We couldn't shoot; we couldn't do anything.

The ape made no outcry. He batted over one scrambling hunter—the other two were knocked unconscious by the fall—and leaped for the tree. Achmed let him have it then. One shot. Through the head.

We rushed to Wang Lo, but haste was something that crazy but persistent cameraman would never need again. He had been ripped, by one blow, from collar bone to abdomen. Every rib was shattered.

Achmed, the inscrutable, bawled.

We buried him right there in the clearing. We didn't have much to say. I found a package of Chinese fire crackers in his torn, ridiculous shirt, and we lighted them. That was all.

The Dyaks, seldom impressed by violent death, were a sobered lot. Not even after they had severed the head of the ape did they show any elation. Gunpowder had ruined the trophy as a tribute to Bali Akang, Lendjau Djok informed me gravely, but Wang Lo's spirit, being liberated so shortly before the ape's demise, had unquestionably entered the orangutan's skull through the hole provided by Achmed's bullet. Thus the head housed Wang Lo's benevolent spirit instead of the ape's fighting spirit, and so became an everlasting omen of peace. And for the first and only time I found something solid in the Dyak reign of superstition. With Wang Lo's spirit guiding their omens, they were at least on the right track.



## CHAPTER 13: STONE MEN

THE DEATH of Wang Lo cast a pall over the whole of Long Nawang, but particularly it affected the boys from Taman Bit's *kampong* who had served as our paddlers. They had taken the happy Chinese to their hearts, and to them his passing was more than the loss of a friend. It was a black omen signifying the most dire consequences. That the orang-utan skull did much to relieve the curse meant nothing to them. The next morning, before they thought I was up, they slid out of their guest house heavily cloaked from head to foot in layers of tree bark.

I watched as they carefully skirted the private *belawang* poles and the carved statuettes in front of each house. When they neared the main *belawang* pole below which their canoes were drawn up, they got down on their hands and knees and crawled. I knew then that they were leaving. They weren't deserting me; they were fleeing something stronger than themselves, and it was a case of each man for himself. The loosely shingled bark cloaks were to conceal them from the evil spirits collected over every *kampong* after a death. It was their belief that each man houses both good and evil spirits in addition to his soul, which



wanders at large for a certain period after his demise. The good are absorbed by the *belawang* poles, but the evil are kept at bay by the carved idols, and consequently might enter anyone who passed too close without taking proper precautions. Hence the tree-bark disguise. They knew Wang Lo's good spirit was in the orangutan skull, so his evil spirits must still be hunting a resting place.

I let them go. In their frightened condition they would have been worse than useless, afraid to make any move whatever without first consulting omens, and when fear is the interpreter no omen is good.

I had two more objectives before I was ready to return. I wanted to find the temples of the stone idols, and I wanted to find the mines from which the gold of Borneo had been taken. I wanted to find the idols not only for photographic purposes but because there is an indescribable lure in discovering handiwork of man that has been lost for centuries. The gold I wanted to find simply because I like to find it. I knew most of the metal used by the Dyaks was free gold found in streams, but there were tales of hard-rock mines of fabulous wealth. I had no way of mining it if I found it, nor did I have any way of getting the ore out of the interior if I could mine it, but for my own satisfaction I wanted to see the stuff.

The idols were going to be a tough proposition because of the tremendous fear and awe with which they were regarded by the Dyaks. To them the stone men were people who had offended the spirits and had been petrified as punishment. The whole region in which the idols were to be found was taboo.



Down on the coast white men to whom I had talked discarded the whole story as a myth. They said the Dyaks liked to talk about such a place because it made a nice foundation for their ghost stories, but that every time a white man had asked to see such an idol, the Dyaks refused to take him there. After a few such refusals the white men, usually army officers who had been sent inland to quell head-hunting, gave up and branded the tales as just so many more lies. I could understand why.

In the first place a Dyak has had his beliefs scoffed at by unsympathetic white men to the point where he is no longer the confiding creature he used to be, even in the Apo-Kajan. And in the second place, an officer sent in to stop their chief source of spiritual strength and entertainment is not apt to be cordially received. I hoped that I, as a sympathetic and unofficial person, might receive more favorable attention.

Lendjau Djok listened to me intently as I explained my object. In the end he said neither yes nor no, indicating it was all in the hands of the *dajoengs* and the omens. I couldn't do much with omens, but I went to work on the *dajoengs*, patiently winning their confidence by listening long hours in the heat when I thought any minute I might keel over with sunstroke while they explained the various rules and *adats* that governed their profession. It was worthwhile. In the end I came away with one of the most fascinating stories on the creation of the world I have ever encountered. The legend is that of the Bahau-Dyaks, but the Kenja-Dyaks who told it to me seemed to prefer it to their own. The world, as explained to me in the sun-baked street of Long Nawang, is made of excrement, and the be-



lief struck me as peculiarly appropriate to my surroundings.

Once, too long ago for there to be a world, two supremely old people were sitting in Apo Lagan, the upper heaven, trying to restore their youth with all the beauty aids at their command. The woman, whose name was Boa Langnji, was quite vain, and she kept her lover, Dale Lilli, working with palm oils on her wrinkling skin for hours. At last she was satisfied, and required only that he pluck her pubic region with a *tsup*, or little brass tweezers.

Dale Lilli was willing, but he was very sleepy. So was Boa Langnji. The soothing ointments and the gentle pluck-pluck of the tweezers put her to sleep, and a moment later Dale Lilli dropped off with his head in her lap. The brass tweezers slipped from his fingers, rolled down a slope, tinkled over the rocks and finally came to rest on a flat stone at the edge of a heavenly river.

The tinkling noise aroused a tremendous *doekoeng*, or worm, who lived at the bottom of the river. This *doekoeng* was almost as large as a dragon, and when he came up to see what was making the noise, he was quite disgusted to find it was only a brass *tsup*. He showed his attitude by depositing his waste over the *tsup*, and sliding back into the water. A *koejow*, or crab, came along then to see what the *doekoeng* was up to, and when he found the pile of waste he did as is the habit of crabs and spread it evenly all over the stone.

So began the earth, with a heart of stone and a layer of excrement in which was buried a brass *tsup*. In the excrement the *tsup* took root, so when the sister of Boa Langnji came down to hunt for the tweezers she found instead a



little brass tree with brass leaves, but with two trunks. The trunks were joined at the top like the tweezers instead of at the bottom. Needless to say, she was quite surprised and rushed off to tell Oewang, a ghost, about her discovery.

Old Oewang went around to look and, being a lewd sort of chap, saw in the split trunk a phallic symbolism he chose to interpret literally. He made use of the trunk in a manner that was both interesting and obscene, with the result that from the inverted crotch there issued two formless beings, one a female called Inei-Klion, and the other a male, called Amei-Klowon.

Amei and Inei had no arms and no legs, but otherwise they could function as man and wife, which they proceeded to do with a great deal of abandon. From their indiscriminate excesses there issued three children, named Kii La Belalang Ka, Kii Loei Belalang Oeboei, and Kii Lang Belalang Oewang, who proceeded without delay to populate the whole island of Borneo.

In the meantime the brass tree kept right on growing and improving. Instead of producing formless human beings, it started working on spirits. The first were pretty bad and they became the evil spirits, the second batch were much better, and they became the inferior good spirits such as inhabit birds, fruit-bearing trees and small animals. The last batch was really high quality: rain and river spirits, the palm spirit, the spirit of courage and, finally, as a supreme effort, the brass tree produced Amei Tingei, the boss spirit who rules everything and who particularly concerns himself with the conduct of the Dyaks. After that the brass tree grew itself right out of the ground and went to Apo Lagan.



Some of its roots remained to become the gold, iron and copper mines used by the Dyaks as their sources of metal.

The Kenja-Dyak legend concerning the origin of the human race is more spectacular but less credible. According to their story there has always been a world, and the highest point on it is Batoe Kasian Mountain. On top of the mountain lives Belare, the thunder ghost. He has a human form, long straggly hair, tremendous tigerlike fangs, incredibly long claws on his hands, and eyes that open as large as the sky. Belare, incidentally, is one of the few spirits known by the same name all over Borneo, a tribute to his importance. One day Belare was sitting up on his peak with nothing to do but make thunderbolts by winking his eyes, but he had no place to put them. There was quite a pile collected and things were getting crowded when he decided to dump the whole works into the valley.

He picked up the pile in his huge, clawlike hands and threw them as far as he could. There was a terrific crash when they hit, and trees, rocks and water jumped right up into the air and started running away. When they got through running they were people.

Personally, I think the story is a little far-fetched, lacking the plausibility of most legends, but the fact remains that there isn't a Dyak in Borneo who doesn't fear that the thunder spirit is coming to reclaim him every time a storm comes up. Belare, they believe, rides with the storm clouds, and every time he opens his mouth thunder is heard, and every time he blinks his eyes the lightning flashes. Whenever a tree is struck or a house shattered, Belare has ripped it apart with his claws. He is everlastingly sorry he let people



loose upon the earth, which is something I can understand, and so he is constantly trying to get them back. The people, on the other hand, seem to like it here and do not want to go back. When the storms ride high, they draw their *mandaus* at each lightning flash and prepare to fight for their right to remain. This is true on the trail or in the *kampong* or in the fields. At the first crack they drop whatever they are doing and pull out their *mandaus*.

By the time I had wormed my way into the confidence of the *dajoengs*, Taman Kila had translated enough spiritual lore to pass as a *dajoeng* himself. He didn't like it, though. Such knowledge, he felt, was beyond his station. It was *adat* that he was as he was, and any attempt to improve himself was nothing short of treason against the wishes of the spirits. His attitude was typical of Borneo. The Dyaks defeat themselves with their own philosophy. If they were meant to progress, then they would progress; since it is obvious they aren't progressing, it is equally obvious that they were not intended to do so. Thus there is no sense in tempting fate by doing something not intended to be done, and so reasoned Taman Kila. He was not a *dajoeng*; it was folly for him to think of himself as one simply because he knew all the tricks.

I consoled him by pointing out that the information went in his ears and out his mouth with the translation, and that as far as the spirits were concerned, he was as impersonal as an echo. He took me literally. A short time later I had occasion to question him upon some points brought up by the *dajoeng*, but he couldn't answer.



"The hill cannot repeat the echo," he explained with a vacuous grin of childish innocence.

My patience did, however, bear the desired fruit. The *dajoeng*, for a consideration that included an alarm clock, three strings of agate beads, and a piece of calico ten feet long, agreed to escort me to the land of Seniang, or stone men. He himself would lead the way.

That night Long Nawang held an open meeting of the town board to decide who was to accompany us on the three-day trip. The meeting was held on the verandah of Lendjau Djok's long-house, and every male eligible to take his place with the city fathers was there. Behind them, concealed in the shadows cast by the open hearth fire, were the women, each one keeping a careful eye on her man. She was there to see that her man conducted himself with distinction, and heaven help the man who fell down in the eyes of his spouse.

The subject of the discussion was about as important as any brought before the board in many a moon. Usually a town meeting had nothing more important to decide than whether or not a house should be built at one end of the *kampong* or the other, or if it wouldn't be better not to build the house at all. Of course head-hunts, big game drives, voyages to the coast, harvest festivals, tattooing ceremonies, rice plantings and kindred affairs of community interest called for meetings also, but those were events which could be expected to crop up every now and then. My desire to go to the land of Seniang was something new and unheard of, and the arguments pro and con were enough to



shatter what little faith I had left in a Dyak's reasoning power.

One warrior was dead set against it. According to the convolutions of the intestines of a pheasant he had shot three months ago, any man journeying to the haunted hills would turn to stone with the others, and he didn't want his brethren to become thus afflicted. In his excitement he leaped high into the air, landing on the loose planks with a thunderous reverberation. Everyone listened gravely and applauded his acrobatics as much as they did his logic. There was no question about it. They loved oratory and theatrics, and the debate all too often was decided by the man who could jump the highest and make the most noise on the planks when he bounced.

Fortunately, a wiry young fellow, very anxious to make an impression on a certain young lady, was on my side. He staged an acrobatic filibuster that had me panting with exhaustion long before he reached the gist of his argument. Always providing, of course, that it had a gist, which is doubtful. He did everything but walk on the ceiling. Once he clinched a point by jumping into the fire. He yelled, hollered and shrieked without saying anything, and the crowd howled approval. And in the end he wore them out. One by one warriors caught his infection and leaped up to announce their intentions of joining the expedition. We would leave in the morning, omens permitting.

The next morning everyone was so tired out by the town meeting they were in a fair way to not being able to dig up any omens at all, but I set off the alarm clock I had given the *dajoeng*, and he decided that was good enough for him.



To the tune of the alarm bell we got underway. There were a few awkward moments when the spring of the dollar clock slipped a couple of cogs, but by some miracle the gears meshed again and we jangled on our way.

Our course this time was south, up the Nawang River about a day's journey. Then we were to leave the canoes and march inland another day's journey in a southwesterly direction to the Bawoei Mountains, the same range we had crossed when we left the Boh River to enter the Apo-Kajan. In the caves and grottoes along the slope we would find the temples I sought.

At the *kampong* where we were to leave the canoes and travel cross country we ran into the inevitable omens. No crocodiles had been seen in the river for a week, a definite sign that somebody had offended something. We would have to wait until the crocodiles came back, because they were very powerful spirits, and without their spiritual support we were doomed. The whole thing smacked of blackmail to me, an attempt to hold me up for presents of sufficient value to make it worth while digging up some favorable omens. I could see that the river was low, and it was obvious that the crocs had gone down to deeper water; not to return until Bali Tadjau Djelau, the river spirit, saw fit to let more water pour down from the sky. But I was darned if I was going to sit around in that ill-smelling hole until I was rained in. This *kampong* was worse, if possible, than Taman Bit's, and the rajah was a lot more cunning.

Taman Bit was mean, but he had a certain amount of respect for white men because of his chain-gang experience. This fat bloke, Adjau Lih by name, had never met a white



man, had no particular fear of the white men, and the stories he had heard of them had only whetted his curiosity as to what one might be like, served on a platter with sweet potatoes.

Under the circumstances, as I had learned by painful experience, the best thing to do was nothing until a favorable moment presented itself. It came to me the next day. I was not in a happy frame of mind, having spent the night in a neglected guest house so teeming with fleas that I woke up three times thinking I was being kidnaped. Even the dogs shunned that place. So when I walked past the *belawang* pole and saw a group of warriors puffing darts at a melon I decided it was high time I asserted my position as a white man. Enough of this being shunted off to the worst den in the *kampong*.

The melon, about a foot in diameter, made a nice soft target in which to plunk a dart, but the boys weren't doing too well. The Dyaks from Long Nawang entered the competition but they were worse. Fat Adjau Lih, his oily face gleaming with sweat and pride, snorted in derision, and I could see his squinty eyes narrow speculatively. No doubt he was figuring that as long as his boys outnumbered mine three to one, and mine were such lousy shots, it might be a good idea to strengthen his spiritual morale with a few fresh heads. There was something of a treaty in effect between his *kampong* and that of Long Nawang, but a treaty was something enforced only when circumstances were sufficiently strong to require it. I figured I could supply those circumstances.

With the usual amount of dramatics which are essential



in impressing the Dyaks, I set up three poles in a row, and impaled three melons on their tops. Every man in the *kampong* watched in open-mouthed fascination, not knowing what was going on but impressed anyway. Next I had Achmed break our single-barreled shotgun. Taman Kila used the barrel as a blowgun, and came pretty close to hitting a melon with the first dart. I invited the other warriors to try. Two or three made an effort, but the rest were afraid of the blowgun that weighed so much. I insisted, however, that Adjau Lih try it, and at last he made a grudging effort. The dart dribbled out of the end of the barrel and fell on the ground.

So far so good. Ostentatiously slipping a dart into the barrel, and quickly palming a shell into place, I reassembled the gun and snapped the breech. Loudly I pointed out that now there was only the smallest of cracks through which I, with my magic breath, could blow the dart out of the barrel. Even the boys from Long Nawang fell for that one, for although they had seen soldiers use guns before, they had no idea of how guns operated. They gathered around pop-eyed while I proceeded with the demonstration.

Achmed took the gun and lined up the three melons in the sight. He was laughing inwardly so hard I feared for a moment he wasn't going to be steady enough to pull the trick off. Nothing pleased that Malay more than to take the Dyaks down a peg or two. Cupping my hands into a funnel, I placed them gently against the side of the breech and puffed. Achmed fired.



The first melon showed a round hole, the second showed a bigger hole, and the third just blew up.

Adjau Lih ran away right where he stood. His legs went through all the motions of a hundred-yard dash, but they didn't go anywhere. When his muscular clutch finally meshed with his mental desire, he shot out of there in a cloud of dust, and for a man of his bulk he exhibited a phenomenal agility in scaling the pole in his verandah. I fully expected to hear the rending crash as he catapulted through the far wall of his house, but he managed to stop in time. As for the rest of his boys, they didn't even attempt to scale the verandah poles. The jungle had been good enough for their ancestors, and in this moment of need it was good enough for them. They hit for the palms. The Long Nawang boys blanched a pea green, but since they figured I was on their side, they hoped the magic was not directed against them. I spent the next ten minutes assuring them that such was the case, and finally the *dajoeng* believed me. He even went so far as to accept my magic as his, and before the day was over he was the most painfully conceited person in the Apo-Kajan.

In the meantime Adjau Lih showed signs of recovery. Glancing up at his doorway, I saw a *mandau* being waved halfheartedly across the opening. It was the meekest defiance I have ever seen. I just let him shake. About an hour later he sent one of his sons out to let me know the omens favored my going inland, that they were such good omens I ought to leave right away, and that he would personally see that I was safely guided to the spot by his own *dajoeng*.

I don't know what his *dajoeng* thought about it, but the



quavering old man who came shivering up to me didn't look exactly happy. A few beads helped soothe his spirit, and when I finally gave him a cheap bell to tie to his pierced ear everything was lovely. We wasted no time getting out of there, the old gent jingling along in the lead, my *dajoeng* following close behind furiously rewinding his alarm clock bell as fast as it ran down. Behind came our porters, looking as though every step forward they took was bringing them that much closer to hell. They figured it might be all right for *dajoengs* and myself to brush elbows with the stone men, but as far as they were concerned they were ordinary mortal men and they preferred to stay that way.

The jungle was no picnic, but fortunately at this point there was no real Rain Forest such as we had encountered before. The reason was obvious once we came to a clearing where I could catch a glimpse of the mountains. Instead of climbing in gentle slopes the range juttied straight up into the air. Rain storms beat against bare rock instead of entangling with the vegetation. Even so we spent the day plowing through as soggy a mess of slime as I care to encounter. Leeches dropped into their accustomed niches, and the mosquitoes restored the familiar puffiness around my face. But in spite of the discomforts which were becoming habitual, I could feel in this jungle the presence of the past. So could the Dyaks.

The closer we came to the cliffs, the thinner became the vegetation, until, shortly before noon of the third day, we clambered over a steep slope to come out on the edge of a vast, almost treeless terrace. Overhead towered the escarpment, rising vertically almost a thousand feet, but with an



awesome overhang that made it look as though it were toppling down on us. Never have I felt so microscopically small. The visual impact of the mighty wall was enough to crush me down into my shoes. As for the Dyaks, they couldn't stand it. To a man they vanished over the edge of the terrace, and nothing in the world could induce them to return. Their job had been to bring me there; I was there, and by all the spirits in Borneo they were going to do no more. With this attitude the *dajoengs* heartily agreed. If anything, they seemed amazed that their bravery had brought them this far.

Taman Kila looked wistfully over the edge, then studied the Malays and me. So far we had done all right. The others were a doubtful proposition. He shrugged in hopeless resignation and followed us.

Half-way across the quarter-mile-wide terrace we came upon the first idol.

Time had pitted the face of the stone image, and braver vandals than my Dyaks had chipped fragments from the head, but still the superior smile remained, a granite jeer at the stupidity of man. I could not overcome the feeling that the smile had not been there when the sculptor laid down his tools. It was too real, too disdainful, and too incredibly intelligent to be the work of some naked, superstition-bound stonecutter. Only some cosmic joke, the tag line of which was still to be snapped, could have moved the thin lips to such a smile of anticipation. At some nameless date in the future the cataclysmic snapper will be cracked, and then on the slopes of the Bawoei Mountains a stone idol will laugh out loud. And it will be a cruel joke, too, for



there was an infinite savageness behind that graven sneer.

As we continued across the terrace it became evident that at one time the entire area had been under cultivation. Every once in a while we would come across depressions in the earth. At first I paid no attention to them, thinking they were a natural part of the topography, but suddenly I noticed I seemed to be following a sunken path that was far too straight to be the work of nature. Looking around me then I saw that the other depressions made a regular network over the terrace, a network such as could have been laid out only for irrigation. Most of the ditches had filled with the rubble of centuries, but enough remained to provide the outline, once I knew what to look for.

It was reassuring to think of human beings sweating in the sun while they worked their rice fields, because as we moved under the massive overhang of the tremendous cliffs we experienced the indescribable sensation of coming into the throne room of the savage gods of Borneo. Mighty rocks, some of them larger than houses, were strewn at the base of the cliff, and as we crawled above, below and among them, our size shrank until we became as ants crawling in crushed rock.

The pile of rubble did not actually touch the base of the cliff. The overhang had dropped the giant slabs beyond the foot, and only flying fragments had splintered against the wall. As soon as we wormed our way through the stone barricade we found ourselves sliding through loose shale into a world sealed against the invasion of time. A vast silence resented the sound of our shuffling feet, and, when a loose rock clattered down, the still air refused to carry



the echoes. We didn't talk. Taman Kila was terrified into speechlessness, and the rest of us had nothing to say.

Already I had seen enough to realize that legend had not lied. The cliff was lined with caverns. At first they were just black holes, but as I moved around a boulder that partly blocked the entrance of the one immediately in front of us, I suddenly drew back with a shock of fright that numbed my feet. For a full minute I stood there, one hand clutching the boulder for support, while my brain worked furiously to make sense of what my eyes refused to believe.

Just inside the cavern entrance a white figure stood regarding me silently. I could only stare back, slack-jawed and mumbling. Gradually, as reason flowed slowly back into my brain, the apparition faded, and in place of an ectoplasmic specter there stood a stone idol covered with a layer of limestone deposited by the water that dripped from the roof.

It was one thing to know that the specter could be accounted for so naturally, but it was another to believe it. Months later Achmed was willing to concede I might be right in saying it was an idol covered with lime, but he never will believe that idol was anything but a ghost. He went close enough to see it, but he never went close enough to examine it. That boy had at last met his equal. I went in alone, and afraid.

I was doing my best to think in terms of what I knew, as I forced myself to enter this grotto of a buried creed, but reason had no place in this crypt of what was both the tomb and the womb of superstition. I reminded myself that Borneo appears in the written records of both China and



India as far back as 200 B.C. I knew also that the culture of India had spread east, flowing through the Malay Peninsula and across the straits to Java, engulfing the entire East Indies, and that its temples had grown in stone on the slopes of every island. To this day in Java the temples of Borobudur and Prambanan are a source of inspiration to all who behold them. But it was little comfort for me in the grotto to know that during the reign of Erlangga in the tenth century the Hindu religion penetrated the Apo-Kajan of Borneo and threatened to outdo the glories of Java and Bali. All too clearly I could see the fierce forces of Islam following in the wake of Hinduism, destroying with flame all that had been built by their gentler predecessors. By the time the eleventh century rolled around, the centers of Hinduism on the islands had been wiped out, but it had been a Pyrrhic victory, with extinction for both sides. In isolated outposts, Hinduism struggled weakly for survival, while in other parts Islamism fought a losing battle against the growth of local superstitions.

Here in this cave was the end of the story.

At first I couldn't see beyond the idol in the entrance, but as my fears subsided and permitted my eyes to become accustomed to the darkness, I saw rows of figures in bas-relief marching out of the gloomy depths. The ceiling moved into the spreading visibility, and I saw in the roundness of its dome the work of the temple builders, but in the thousand years or so since the last chip had been knocked off, the dripping water had festooned the arch with countless stalactites of lime carbonate. Nature had perfected what the ancients had begun, until now in this twentieth cen-



ture the forgotten cavern glistened with a delicate ornateness more incredibly beautiful than any temple assembled by the artistry of mere man.

Moving cautiously across the uneven floor, skirting the growths of mushroomlike stalagmites, I approached one of the figures hewn out of the living rock of the wall. Lime carbonate had cloaked it in a white mantle, giving it the appearance of a statue wrapped in sheeting to preserve it from the dust. With my knife I tried chipping away the lime deposit, a move that was disastrously successful. At the first application of pressure the whole side of the wall peeled off like a poor plastering job, and I was left flat on my back with the painful job of combing stalactites out of my hair.

In anything but a reverent mood, I assembled my bruised and battered hulk, and scrambled out of the litter. As far as I was concerned the temple and everything in it could go to hell.

But instead of stalking away in outraged dignity, I stood transfixed. If the falling scale of lime had been a curtain parting on the opening act of an Oriental spectacle with all its pomp and glitter I could not have been more overwhelmed. For the wall before me had come to life in color, and a dozen figures postured in the stiff symbolism of a Hindu dance, on either side of Siva, the Great Reproducer. Beaten gold was still evident, and here and there the rocks showed traces of carmine and black and ochre. Painted eyes of the lesser figures stared at me in mild interrogation, but Siva looked at me boldly, as well he might.

I have seen many carved images of the Great Reproducer



in the Orient, and many of them have possessed certain attributes that would not bear too close a scrutiny by the more puritan among us, but here in the forgotten cavern was a Siva of such virile proportions that it seemed the very force of his presence must preserve his children from extinction. That they had fallen into the degraded superstitions of the Dyaks was no fault of this titan of the cliffs. Some other force had changed their destiny, and a limestone sheet had been drawn over the rich lasciviousness of the past. Perhaps it is just as well. No modern man could live up to the inspiration provided by that gorgeously obscene piece of statuary.

I went out of there in a state of mind that defies analysis. I don't know that my visit to the tenth century contributed anything to my knowledge of the ways of the world, or changed my attitude toward my fellow man. I know that for two or three days I seemed to be wandering in a mental daze in which everything was vague and out of focus. I had seen enough to know that there was something on the other side of a curtain, but what the curtain was, or what was on the other side, I have no idea. Out of the corner of my eye I see shifting panoramas of dazzling beauty, but when I turn to catch a full glimpse of the shimmering pageantry, I see only the final flick of a vanishing curtain.

The Dyaks saw me as a man filled to the ears with evil spirits. My own boys wouldn't let me come near them. At the *kampong* where we left the canoes, Adjau Lih implored me from a distance not to enter. Even when I offered to walk ten times around the *belawang* pole, he remained obdurate. The pole was strong in magic, but not as strong as



the evil spirits who had entered my body and numbed my brain while I stood in the temple of the stone men. If I entered, his *kampung* would be forever polluted by ghosts too powerful to be exorcised by all the available magic in the land.

My paddlers, who had kept at least fifty feet ahead of me all the way back from the mountains, refused to enter the same canoe with me, though they did agree to escort us from a discreet distance if Achmed and his boys would do the paddling. Poor Taman Kila was in a terrible state of mind. He knew he was dependent upon me to get him back to the coast where he had various wives awaiting his return, but he also felt that he was selling his soul into perdition by remaining in my company. In the end the thought of his luscious wives won out. With a reckless "to hell with my soul" attitude, he climbed into my canoe and picked up a paddle. But it was days before the haunted look left his eyes as he scanned the skies for omens, good or bad.

News of my visit to the Seniang had preceded us to Long Nawang. The people were visibly afraid that I might want to stop overnight there, even though out of respect for past friendship they would not deny me the privilege if I insisted upon it. I could see no reason for disturbing their peace of mind for the sake of a night's sleep in a flea den, so, while my Malays kept the canoe in midstream, I made a dicker with Lendjau Djok to have his paddlers continue to escort me up the river to Boi Djalong's *kampung*. The *dajoeng* who had been my guide was the only one possessing magic powerful enough to come close to me to receive the trade goods that were the price of the escort. I felt like a



man in quarantine with some malignant and highly contagious disease, but as I transferred beads, cloth, a packet of fire crackers and some small mirrors, and saw his crafty old eyes light up with greed, I didn't feel so bad. Whatever curse my presence might place upon the *kampong* would soon be dissipated by the lavishness of my gifts.

And so in spiritual disgrace I returned to Boi Djalong's *kampong*, and slunk out on the other side. The Mahakam River boys who had given me up as dead, and had resigned themselves to becoming slaves of the Kenja-Dyaks, were so glad to see me they didn't care whether I was polluted or not. As long as I was there to take them home, I was a liberator. Or so I thought.

After we had skirted Boi Djalong's *kampong* so as not to pollute it with our contagious spirits, and had bid good-by to the relieved paddlers from Long Nawang, we picked up our group of Mahakam boys, all fat and in good shape, and headed for the Rain Forest. The Mahakams kept crowding me, almost pushing me off the trail. Achmed and Wirio began to bristle, and trouble seemed to be in the air when Taman Kila, his face wreathed in smiles for the first time since the trip to the cavern, hastened to explain. The spirits of Seniang are bad for the Kenjas, but good for the Mahakams. I was now filled with powerful good spirits, and they were only trying to absorb as many of them as they could by rubbing against me.

Considerably mollified by this statement, and relieved to find myself no longer an outcast, I made the rounds of my crew and shook each one by the hand. They literally bloomed under this honor. And Taman Kila, that crazy



Dyak, went bounding along the trail like an uncaged monkey. He was a definite believer in the old saw, "When in Rome do as the Romans do." As long as I was an outcast in the Apo-Kajan, I was an outcast with him, but now that I had been accepted again by the Mahakams, everything was lovely. Their spirits would be his until we got to the next *kampong*.

We went through the Rain Forest almost unaware of the leeches, so glad were the boys to be heading home. We came to the peak and the sweat dried on our bodies. I looked back. It was pretty down there in the Apo-Kajan. And there was gold, too. Somewhere.

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The stone lady, an ancient relic of forgotten Hindu glory, is believed by the Dyaks to be a woman who offended the spirits and was petrified.





to Bandjermasin. In that stretch I would pass up almost enough riches to make myself a millionaire ten times over, and I would come closer to starving to death than at any other time on the trip. I would sleep on diamond beds and complain of the lumps; wade in gold streams and gripe about the cold water; paddle through swamps where oil scum floated an inch thick, and swear bleakly because there was nothing to eat in all that oil-tainted vastness. Diamond mines, coal mines, gold mines or oil wells, one was as bad as the other, and all combined were worse than a plague of mosquitoes. There they were, ready to make me rich, and what the hell could I do with a canoe full of coal, or oil, or high-grade ore or diamond matrix? I could spend a month working myself to the bone to get a poke of free gold from the river bed, and lose it in the first rapids to smash up my canoe. I could pick up enough rough diamonds to fill a window on Fifth Avenue and find when I reached the coast that I had nothing but volcanic glass. The only thing I could do to retain my sanity was to forget about it, and that was about as easy to do as to forget an infected mosquito bite.

Upon my arrival at Long Bloeoë I sent my crew of Mahakam Dyaks home. They were glad to go. Their trip to the Apo-Kajan had made them world travelers, and they were eager to get back to be admired for their exploits. There would be some tall lying going on in the old home town when they tied up in front of their *belawang* pole.

The Long Bloeoëites belong to the Mahakam River tribes, but because of their isolation in the mountains they have become a tribe unto themselves, and are known as Pnihing-Dyaks. They are a clean race, a little dumber, per-



haps, than their relatives down the river, but harder working. *Adats* have the same strangle hold on everything they do, with pathetic results. All season they will work like dogs to get a crop out of their sterile, rock-strewn soil, and then some black omen will come up that will forbid the harvest. Maybe a bird will fly the wrong way, or a snake take the wrong turn, and a year's work is gone for nought. The pitiful thing is that they are just dumb enough to accept an *adat* as an iron-clad fact, and not smart enough to invent counter-*adats*. In my own case, I found myself something of a superhero because of the lies told by my Mahakam paddlers, and the whole *kampong* was frantically eager to do things to please me, but every now and then an *adat* would come up that was contrary to my wishes. Then they were torn between their desire to obey me, and their inability to defy superstition. A dog being commanded by two masters could not express more agonized bewilderment than a Pnihing-Dyak caught between a desire to please and an *adat*.

I had no difficulty, however, in hiring a crew to take me up the Mahakam a few miles to a small stream that had its source in the heart of the Lesong Mountains, over which I would have to climb to reach the Belaban River.

These boys were really fast-water workers. They had to be, in the canyons and gorges of the upper Mahakam. Their canoes were so small, and were hewn from such tough wood, they could skim over a rock if it was wet on top, and if it was a little dry they could knock off the high spots with the bow.

There was no room in a Pnihing-Dyak canoe for a passenger to sit in royal comfort. Four paddlers and a hundred



pounds of luggage was about all one would hold, and when I say paddlers, I mean somebody who would really stand up and scratch water. I was no soft lily, but after three hours of bucking rapids I was hunting as fervently as a born Dyak for omens that would stop the trip.

I thought the going up the Mahakam was tough, but I hadn't even warmed up to the job when we came to the Tjehang. That was the stream that was to take us to the Lesong Mountains. Take us? That vindictive chunk of white water was so tough it would turn on itself and spit in its own eye. An iron crowbar dropped in at the upper end would come out of the chute fifteen minutes later as a rusty stain on the water. Even a salmon bent on suicide would take one look at that hunk of liquid fury and hunt for a more tranquil maelstrom in which to die.

I couldn't believe my eyes when the brown fiend who was holding down the stern of my canoe suddenly flipped us to the left and drove straight for the mouth of the gorge. I knew then he meant to kill me, and I would have shot him in his tracks if the bucking canoe would have given me two seconds in which to reach for my gun. Instead, all I could do was open my mouth in horror, steady my rubber knees and keep my balance. A lot of spray washed my face, the canoe climbed straight up a couple of times, and then we were riding level inside the mouth of the gorge. One by one the canoes following me repeated the miracle until all were present and accounted for. My paddlers grinned and beached us on a shelf of shale.

I didn't know it then, but the stretch we had just come through was comparatively calm water. I had scaled cliffs



with tooth and nail, rope and rings, and in a basket; now I was to do it by canoe. Up to this point I had never heard of seagoing mountaineers, and my horror at finding I had hired a whole crew of them did little to quiet my sleep on the spray-soaked shelf. The roar of the water was no lullaby either.

In the morning I discovered that the whole course of the Tjehang River was one of those freaks of nature for which Borneo is notorious. I climbed the three-hundred-foot cliff over our camp while the boys were eating breakfast, and from the top I could see the crest of the Lesong Mountains. What I saw did not add to my peace of mind.

There was something weirdly unfinished about the whole landscape, as if I had crawled over the brink of time and caught Nature hastening to cover the scars of a neglected birthmark. Off to the east, across the Mahakam, the jungle lay dark and green, steam bleaching it to a washed blue on the hazy horizon as is proper for a jungle; but to the south nothing was normal. The Lesong peaks looked as if they had been dropped out of a hod while the world was being plastered. In between were the trowel marks, a wild jumble of hardened mortar, loose scrap and cosmic rubble that rolled in a chaotic jumble to the very promontory on which I was standing. There it stopped abruptly as if it had encountered a sign, "No Dumping Allowed."

There was little vegetation on the upper levels of this vast petrified mistake, and such as did grow did so with a frightened reluctance. At my feet was a crawling layer of moss that seemed to be doing its best to get somewhere else, while the gray lichens seemed more dead than alive. Down



in the valley it was another story. Between my promontory and the next ridge, there was such a welter of bamboo, monstrous iron and teak woods, camphor and rattan, that it seemed that even the monkeys must carry *mandaus* to cut their way through the liana-strewn terraces.

I could see the need for the canoes. The rapids might be all but impossible to buck, but even so they were the easiest way out. To travel by foot through the valleys would be a trail-cutting job best tackled with a portable sawmill, while the raw, chalky cliffs were something to be scaled only with balloons. Much as I hated the idea of paddling up what to me was nothing more than an agitated watery grave, I saw it was the only way out.

Taking a last look at the Tjehang knifing its way through the jumble, I slid down over the cliff and climbed into my canoe. My brown paddlers took their places and shoved off.

My feelings at that moment have returned to me from time to time in the form of nightmares. In my nocturnal disturbances I see myself sliding down the inside of a rubber hose attached to a water faucet. The water is turned on and I go shooting out into a gray-walled washing machine out of which I try to climb like a drowning rat. The walls are too high and slippery for me to make it, so I keep falling back into the swirling water, occasionally getting doused as I pass under the hose. Just when things get so bad they can't get any worse the washing machine starts up. Giant paddle wheels swat me from one side to the other. Huge cups smash up and down. The walls begin to spin. Sometimes I hit bottom, sometimes I bang against the top. And then I wake up laughing, because no matter how bad my night-



mare might be, it can never approach the terrible reality of the gorge of Tjehang.

By the time we reached the main range of mountains I was a washed-out wraith of despair, firmly convinced that the next whirlpool would claim what was left of me. When I first saw the waterfall I just shut my eyes, groaned feebly and prepared for the end.

The grating of the canoe on the shale came as a shock of surprise. It didn't seem possible that at last my Pnihing crew had encountered something they wouldn't tackle in their hollowed-out chip of wood. The falls weren't more than a hundred feet high, and the water hit two or three rocks on the way down that would serve as ideal resting places. But they seemed to think otherwise. Firmly they announced that we had gone as far as we could by canoe. From now on it was up and over by foot.

Achmed stoically stepped out of his canoe, unstrapped his shotgun and poured the water out of the barrel. He just didn't give a damn. Another canoe slid up to the shelf. Two Pnihing-Dyaks stepped out, unstrapped Taman Kila and poured him out. He didn't give a damn either. He thought he was dead and was glad to let it go at that. Admo, Wirio and Kitjil were in about my shape, which meant they were like drowning persons caught a little late on the third bounce. Grateful, but indifferent.

We spent the next two days sweating out the water we had absorbed in our passage through the gorge, which means we did some tall sweating. Unfortunately, when we crossed a ridge of the Lesong Mountains the magnificent view I anticipated did not materialize. We reached the bald



ridge just as a giant cloud came floating across the valley, and before I could even look around we were enveloped in a cold mist. That scared the Pnihing-Dyaks half to death. They thought the spirits were drawing a curtain over the land to forbid our entrance, and they were all for heading for home, fast.

It took a lot of diplomacy on my part to keep them in line and started over the cliffs in the right direction, but I was getting good at it. So good, in fact, that I nearly fell over the cliff myself while pointing out that no spirits could push them off the rocks while I was on guard.

Half-way down we came upon a headless skeleton. It lay right across the trail, and a bamboo shoot was growing up through the ribs. In the category of Dyak omens, this was the blackest yet. There just isn't a favorable omen made strong enough to overcome the dire malignancy of a headless skeleton across the trail, let alone a skeleton pierced by a bamboo shoot. I saw ourselves camped on the side of the mountain until I grew a long, white beard.

My Pnihing-Dyaks blanched to the color of weak tea, while Taman Kila, lighter in skin than the Pnihings, turned a mottled white. They clustered together in a tight group, too terrified to squeak. And then I saw it, a huge gray wasp nest housing a tremendous colony of venomous combat jobs. Achmed saw what I was looking at and permitted himself the liberty of a weak smile. No words were necessary. Achmed unslung his shotgun, flicked the barrel, and blew a big hole in the wasp nest. Out of that hole came pouring the concentrated fires of hell.

There is not a beast in Borneo, including the rhino, that



can stand up to a strafing by those striped tigers of the sky. Omens, superstitions, or the materialized demons themselves would have been run down by the Dyaks when they saw what was coming. They could have run up hill, away from the skeleton, but the going down hill was faster, and what they wanted was speed. I waited just long enough to see that they vanished in the right direction and then started out after them. The delay was almost fatal. I was stung twice. The first one enabled me to clear a stump and a couple of the smaller trees. The second one paralyzed me in mid-air and I nearly broke my neck.

Of course all our supplies were left where they fell. My Malays and I had to wait until after dark before we could start trekking the stuff down, and even then there were hundreds of the devils still buzzing resentfully around. None of the Pnihings would go near the place. They probably made a ten-mile detour around it on their way back.

The next day brought us to the headwaters of the Belaban River. At this point it wasn't much more than a trickle, and we had a lot of trouble finding it, and in recognizing it after it was found. There was water enough around there, and plenty of streams, creeks and rivulets, but all they seemed to do was wander into one swamp and out another. We were beginning to get pretty well acquainted with some of the older settlers among the frogs and the mosquitoes when we hit a stream that started out as if it were going somewhere. We held a conference, consulted omens, caught blowflies, and otherwise came to the scientific conclusion that this was indeed the Belaban. By that time we had



settled so deep in the muck we nearly stayed there permanently.

The next town at which we could get canoes was Long Tamaloë on the Boesang, three days down the river by canoe. Under the circumstances, I decided the best thing to do was send five men down on a bamboo raft and have them engage a crew to come back for the rest of us in canoes. I thought it would take them about a week. It took two weeks. It seems they ran into some omens. In the meantime, we ran into some mosquitoes. Malaria sneaked up on us, and by the time the canoes reached us we were living on a diet of quinine. Bad stuff, that malaria, and the cure is almost as bad. Fortunately, none of the cases proved fatal. If just one man had gone under I would have lost a dozen because some of the boys were so far down the only thing that pulled them through was their implicit confidence in my magic.

As soon as the canoes arrived I paid off the Pnihings, and watched them slip off into the jungle. They were all right. The sick ones became well at the thought of heading home, and the quinine I gave them would insure complete recovery if they would eat it instead of trying to wear it as a charm. A couple of hand axes I presented as a bonus also went a long way toward curing any ills.

We reached Long Tamaloë in three days, counting time out for omens. We shot two rapids that would have had me white with terror before Tjehang, but which I was now able to pass through without even disturbing the ash on my cigarette.

Long Tamaloë is one of the richest towns in the world,



if they ever get around to finding out about it. If the streets aren't paved with gold, it's because the layers of filth have covered up the precious metal. If the women aren't decked out in diamonds, it is because they prefer cheap beads and tattered trade cloth. Otherwise the gold and diamonds are both there. I saw enough of both of them to make me forget my fading symptoms of malaria, and I even picked up some samples. It is true my choicest diamond, for which I paid three yards of calico, turned out to be glass, but a few of my poorest samples turned out to be the real thing. As for the gold, it assayed as close to pure as it is possible to come this side of the mint.

I saw some diamond mines, too, back up on the side of a hill. Scratches in the dirt were all they were. No real attempt has ever been made actually to get in and dig the stones up. Such sustained effort is impossible for a Dyak anyway, especially as the rough diamonds are not particularly attractive. The Chinese traders were responsible for such few efforts as were made. They come up the Boesang at infrequent intervals, showing more nerve than sense, and exchange cheap trade goods for diamonds and gold. The Dyaks, prompted by a desire for a bolt of cloth, will go out and scratch a hole where the last diamond was found. If they don't find another within two or three hours, they forget about the whole thing. The free gold they pick up in the stream, if it is accommodating enough to glitter prettily. What the stream beds would yield if scientifically mined is a subject for fantastic conjecture, but government mineralogists tell me Borneo is rich enough to make the fabulous mines of California look like penny-ante stuff.



I was all for getting out of Long Tamaloë as fast as possible. It was a miserable *kampong*, worse by far than Taman Bit's home town over in the Apo-Kajan, but while I was trying to get another crew of paddlers rounded up, a tattoo artist caught a customer and everything was off. Tattooing is a serious matter, and while the ordeal is in progress no new business can be started, no grain harvested, no trips made, and no hunting. This taboo applies not only to the victim but to the whole *kampong*.

Just how seriously the Dyaks regard tattooing I had no idea until I endured a week of watching it, unable to move beyond the edge of the *kampong* limits. The whole process is steeped in superstitious symbolism and *adats*. Much of it is based upon the peculiar belief that in Apo-Kesio, the Dyak heaven, everything is the reverse of things here on earth. Sour becomes sweet in heaven, no means yes, black becomes white, and hot becomes cold. Now a Dyak going to heaven wants to look his very best, and if his body here on earth were marked up with a lot of light-colored symbols, these symbols would turn very dark and disfigure his light body in heaven. Accordingly, he tattoos himself with the blackest pigments he can find here on earth so that when he reaches the other world his tattoo marks will be positively radiant in their whiteness. For this purpose, soot is the most admirably adapted.

The tattooing of a woman has additional significance in that the part of her soul that is free to go to heaven must pass through a stretch of limbo where everything is in total darkness. A man going through this limbo is permitted to carry a resin torch, but the woman has nothing to depend



upon but the radiance of her tattoos. The whiter these marks, and the more of them, the easier she will find her way to the land where her ancestors await her coming. They will have no way of knowing her other than by her family tattoo marks, so these will be scrutinized most minutely. Only if everything is in order will she be accepted by her family. The part of her soul not free to go to heaven must remain near her body as a ghost.

The tattoo artist, usually a woman, must be very careful to keep her designs within the limits of the woman's or man's station in life. If she adds a few extra flourishes suggesting a more noble station, not only will the wearer be exposed as an impostor in the next world, but her own ancestors will have nothing to do with her because they have no way of identifying her without the family tattoos. These are as distinct as heraldic symbols, and anyone familiar with Borneo tattooing can tell at once the tribe, family, and station in life of any Dyak he meets.

As mentioned before, special accomplishments such as long trips, head-hunts, and feats of bravery merit special tattoos in addition to the family and tribal symbols, but these call for only minor celebrations lasting a day or two. The big tattooing celebration comes when a sufficient number of young men and women in the *kampung* reach adulthood. Such celebrations take place about once a year in the large *kampongs*, but sometimes are as much as six years apart in the smaller tribes because the affair ties up business as long as a month.

What I ran into in Long Tamaloë proved nearly as disastrous as quarantine. A young Dyak who had accom-



panied a Chinese trader down river returned alone, a really brave feat, and he darned well wanted proper recognition engraved on his skin. His family and the rajah consented to the small celebration, a matter of a day or two, but in the meantime all the rest of the young men and the women who had been waiting for about four years for adult recognition suddenly decided that, as long as the tattoo artist was at work, it was time for them to get the works, too. The idea spread like wildfire. It was slack season, the harvest was in, and it was time for a celebration anyway. That I wanted to get out of town didn't mean a thing.

Boom went the drums, the mask dancers whipped up the proper carnival spirit, and the ordeal was on. I was stuck. No one could leave the *kampong* while the mass ordeal was on.

I had plenty of time to study the technique, and if I hadn't been feeling so sorry for myself the sight would have made me sick. Any woman can do the work, but usually the artist is a woman well along in life. During the process, women being tattooed cannot go inside their houses, and if it rains they must seek shelter underneath the *lepo parei*, or rice barn. They cannot touch food with their hands, either, and so must be fed with sticks by their friends. This is due to the peculiar belief that evil spirits emanate from a woman undergoing the pains of tattooing, and if she enters her house, the place is tainted; if she touches food, all food in the *kampong* is spoiled because of the close affinity among the food spirits. The sticks with which she is fed seem to serve as insulation units.

The young lady who served as my object lesson in the



art was probably sixteen, the exact date of her birth being a subject on which neither mathematics nor her mother could agree. A few years one way or another didn't really matter anyway in a land where time has no special importance. She was a game little vixen, straight, flat-thighed and flat-breasted, and with a wicked gleam in her almond eyes. Not only that, but she was something of a belle, with her straight black hair, her eyebrows and lashes severely plucked, and her teeth a beautiful shade of black from chewing betel nut. She could spit twelve feet, and make smart, snapping noises with her cud, too. But right now she was concerned only with stenciling her smooth skin with the symbols that would entitle her to womanhood and a husband.

The old crone who was to do the work sized up the job with an expert eye, made a few rough measurements of the girl's legs, and spat on a stone for luck. The next step was the one and only painless step in the whole business. Selecting a piece of soft wood, she began the patient work of carving out the family symbols that were to be transferred to the skin of her victim. The process was much like that of engraving a linoleum block or woodcut for the purpose of printing pictures or cards. This job took two days, but I was astonished by the accuracy with which she reproduced symbols. Her lines, drawn with a crude knife, achieved a delicacy that was nothing short of amazing, notwithstanding that the wood was grainy and tough in spite of its soft absorbency.

Now came the hard part. Charcoal made of damar wood was mixed with water to the consistency of paste, and the



solution was applied to the woodcut. The soft wood absorbed the excess water and the engraving was ready to be printed on the skin. The girl lay prone, legs spread apart, while the tattoo artist made the transfer. The first proof pulled was perfect, ready for the slaughter.

The old crone picked up her precious tattooing device, a flat piece of wood about six inches long, at the end of which, like bristles in a toothbrush, were three brass needles. The needles were in a straight line about an eighth of an inch apart, and they projected through the wood a like distance. Squinting about for a likely place to begin, she selected a nice clear line of charcoal on the girl's buttock and applied the needles. With a stick about a foot long and an inch thick she rapped smartly on the instrument. The needles sank in to the hilt and the girl's fanny quivered. A small jerk and the needles came out, to be moved down a quarter of an inch and the process repeated. Tears rolled from the little maiden's eyes, but by the time she had felt the sting a dozen times she was able to control her impulsive jerking and lie still while the line of charcoal was being traced out in punctured flesh. Four taps to the inch, forty-eight to the foot, and probably ten feet of convolutions in the design. Later, when the girl wanted to be really fancy, she would be engraved with designs so involved they would cover thirty or forty yards if drawn out in a straight line.

Tattooing, the artist unsmilingly informed me, hurts only when applied on the inside of the thighs, on the forehead, and on the backs of the hands. The rump, she said, was the easiest of all. But watching this little girl totter off after three hours of the ordeal with only a small part of her de-





Two elevated elaborate *liangs*. These vaults, representing months of work, are carved *after* the death of the honored party.





These are Punan Dyaks, the nomadic gangsters of the jungle. Rough, tough, and physically fearless, they will run only from spirits.



sign completed on one leg, and the other leg still to go, I was a little dubious of just what she meant by hurting. Anything, apparently, this side of outright murder.

The next day the woodcut was again applied to the unfinished design and the work continued. I noticed that the punctures of the previous day were starting to swell. By the time the one leg was completed at the end of the fifth day, white spots of infection were visible in the first punctures, and the swelling was pronounced. The tattoo artist expressed satisfaction that the soot forced into the wounds by the needles was starting to set. The inflammation, she said, always followed, and in view of the unsanitary conditions under which the operation was performed I could understand why.

The dozen or so other youngsters who were also going through the mill didn't seem to be enjoying themselves too much. Lack of rest in their accustomed beds, enforced sleeping on the cold ground under the rice barns, the constant nervous strain of prolonged physical torture, and the painful infection contributed little to their comfort. Yet the sight of this rigidly repressed suffering, instead of squelching any desire on the part of the others to undergo the process, produced a sort of mass hysteria in which everybody wanted to get tortured. Men recalled designs they had often wanted to see on their hides, and the women, too, thought of ways in which they could have a few feminine gew-gaws engraved into their skin instead of hung on the outside. In the meantime, nothing was being done on anything else in town. In sudden panic I realized that if I didn't do something in a hurry, I would be stuck in this awful *kampong*



until the whole gruesome business had run its course like a slow plague. There were only three women really good at the work, and at the rate they were going it would take at least a month to complete the job.

After I had been held up a week, a remark dropped by the rajah during a lunch of toasted coconut and boiled rice, gave me a clue. In effect he said he wished his downstream neighbor, Rajah Soehoe Gon, could be informed of the tattooing festival, as he had a lot of young men and women whose adulthood was in need of official recognition. They could get together and clean the whole business up at once.

"You give me the canoes, a few men, and I'll go down and invite him up," I volunteered generously.

The rajah wouldn't hear of it. Such an action would violate one of the most sacred rules of the tattooing ceremony, that no one leave the *kampong* while a skin was still in the course of being punctured.

Right then and there I launched into one of my greatest feats of diplomacy and after-dinner speaking. Within a scant three hours I managed to convince the rajah that I would not be interrupting the tattooing ceremony; I would be contributing to its efficacy by increasing the attendance. The abstract idea I had to convey was that if I went from a tattooing *kampong* to another for the purpose of enlarging the scope of the ceremony, I was contributing to the cause and not defying an *adat*. The *adat* applied, I said, only when a person left a tattooing *kampong* for another without bringing the other within the sphere of the tattooing. A simple matter, but I became so involved, the rajah so



mixed up, that I was still arguing it out with him after he had given us the canoes and pushed us out into the river.

At the next *kampong* I was careful to arrange for my transportation down the river before extending the invitation for them to attend the tattooing upstream. Fortunately the omens were on my side. Two days later I was in Toembangdjoeloi, where the omens weren't. I stayed there a week, waiting for the right bird to come along. I learned one comforting fact in Toembangdjoeloi, and that is that if a man or woman dies during the tattooing ordeal, the soul is classed as a child's, and it immediately goes to heaven, assisted through the black limbo by the guiding light of a brilliant torch extended before it by its ancestors. It was a nice thing to know, sitting in the dirt awaiting the addle-pated pleasure of a *boekan* bird, that everything was so neatly arranged.

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## CHAPTER 15: WE MADE IT

THERE are three tribes in Borneo seldom visited by white men, partly because they have no home in which to be visited, but mainly because they are so tough, so cold-blooded and so utterly fearless that they would regard a social visit as an open invitation to murder. These nomadic gangsters of the jungle are called the Hebans, the Punans and the Bukats, and among the three of them they have Borneo pretty evenly divided.

If three bands of man-eating tigers decided to divide up a country, the result would be pretty much the same. The Punans, the Hebans and the Bukats own everything in their respective territories, and any man or animal dwelling therein naturally belongs to them. Thus they who possess nothing yet own everything. Unseen and unheard, they slink through the jungle on silent feet, moving swiftly from one camp to another, seldom staying in the same place more than a few nights and getting nowhere. They don't want to get anywhere; it is enough that they get away from the place they last were. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that their children are born under dry leaves, cradled in the tree tops, and weaned on panther milk. At the age of six a



Punan youngster will run down a monkey in its own tree-top, and at the age of ten will walk up to a wild boar and spit betel-nut juice in its eye. By the time a youth reaches manhood he will already have killed his man, speared a panther, and fought a wild bull on the ground with a blow-gun. They are tough. Not many of them reach manhood.

In view of the cowardice of the sedentary Dyaks, the attitude of the Punans is all the more remarkable. Their condition of mind cannot be so much construed as bravery or fearlessness, as it is rather a peculiar mental void where personal safety is concerned. I am firmly convinced that the only reason a Punan will tackle a panther is because he doesn't know any better.

All the way up the Mahakam, across to the Apo-Kajan and back to the Barito I was on the lookout for the roving killers, but all we heard of them were rumors. The Hebans had been through here, the Bukats through there, and the Punans had snatched a child in another *kampong*. From these rumors I was able to piece together a fragmentary picture of the primitive economic system enjoyed by these jungle gypsies.

They are not above trading with the agricultural Dyaks, the Chinese peddlers and the few Dutch traders, but when they do so it is on their own terms. Not that they drive hard bargains. They don't, because they have no conception of our values. Their biggest need is for metal and cloth, and to secure a new *mandau* a Punan will ride a wild boar bareback if necessary.

In spite of their lack of fear where mortal dangers are concerned, they are incredibly superstitious, so much so



that in comparison a normal Dyak's reaction to a snake going the wrong way looks like solid common sense. Should a Punan die, his *mandau* and all his earthly possessions—a piece of string, a couple of beads, a breechcloth, blowgun and darts—are left with the unburied corpse, even though he might possess one of the three or four *mandaus* in the tribe. The reason is, of course, that his spirit might need the possessions later on, and would curse anyone taking them away. Thus there is no such thing as handing weapons down from father to son. Each new generation must secure its own. They cannot make them. They are never in one place long enough to set up a forge, nor would they know what to do with one if they had it. So they trade with the river tribes and the Chinese.

Their big ace in the hole is the cowardice of the stay-at-home tribes. A rajah needing more slaves will often employ a Punan tribe to do a little kidnaping for him rather than run the risk of a personal encounter in a neighboring *kampung*, or he might employ the Punans to bring him fresh human heads to replenish the fading magic of his old collection. Young men wishing to impress their maiden friends will trade a *mandau* for a set of panther teeth or a boar tusk necklace. The Chinese are eager to purchase monkey gall bladders, deer horns, bear claws, snake stones, porcupine quills and similar items to be sold to Chinese apothecaries for medicine. Panther skins for war-cloaks, deer horns to be carved into knife handles, orangutan skulls and hides for Dyak magic, and various vegetable poisons are also commodities in which the Punans deal successfully.

There is no way of getting in touch with the Punans or



the other nomad tribes on their own grounds, but when wanted they always seem to appear. A rajah has but to think longing thoughts of a new force of slaves, and suddenly when he is alone near the edge of the *kampong* he will find himself staring into the intent brown eyes of a Punan. The rajah does not cry out. He knows that all around him, invisible in the brush, are the blowguns of a dozen warriors, and when these boys puff a dart, they don't miss.

The deal is made in a few hurried moments, and a week later three or four frightened Dyaks mysteriously appear in the rajah's *kampong*. The rajah pays the price, too, knowing full well that if he doesn't, a *mandau* is apt to caress his neck any day. In fact, the Punans are notoriously fair in their dealing with all tribes, and they are just as likely as not to sell a batch of slaves to a *kampong*, turn right around and kidnap another batch from that *kampong* to be sold to the tribe from whom they kidnaped the original batch. Nothing is done about it, either.

A Chinese desiring to do business with the Punans has only to paddle up the river. If the Punans have anything to trade they will slip into the Chinese's camp some dark night, complete their business and vanish. They might trade a rough diamond for a piece of cheap calico or beads, but to them the calico or the beads is more valuable than the stone, and they are satisfied. That is all the trader has to do, keep them satisfied. If he fails in this elementary requirement, his head might be the one supplied to a rajah who has contracted for such an ornament for his what-not.

Under the circumstances it can be seen that the settled tribes regard the nomads with terror, as well they might.



"Go to sleep or the Punans will get you," is a sure way to frighten a Dyak baby into a state of hysterical wakefulness.

My only glimpse of the wild rovers in action came one hair-raising day, shortly after we had negotiated the triple junction of the Boesang, the Djoeloi and the Moeroeng Rivers, which join to form the Barito. These three streams, each one of navigable size even during the dry season, were swollen with a couple of cloudbursts up the line a way, and they were all trying to crowd through a narrow slit in a range of hills. The Boesang was trying to become the Barito, the Djoeloi was trying to flow up the Moeroeng, and the Moeroeng was trying to flow up the Djoeloi, and the Barito, choked to the gills, was trying to reverse its flow and become the Boesang. It was no place for a log canoe, but the unpredictable omens had decided we were to go through instead of portaging to a crossing of the Moeroeng a discreet distance above the turbulence and returning to the water safely below the junction.

Bali Tadjau Djelau, most important of all the river spirits, has his headquarters in the junction; and Balis Asong Lidong (whirlpool), Tenalang (boulders and cliffs), Membang (rapids and chutes), Aja (waves and ripples) and Sungei (a sort of aquatic overseer of all the thousands of minor ghosts, spirits, sprites, elves, etc., that inhabit the rocks, sands, muck and swamps) use the place as a convenient base of operation because they have rivers leading four different directions. Riding a canoe through this convention of spirits was something I would not care to spit through too often. The drain on the salivary glands was terrific.



Three miles below the junction the gorge narrowed to a chute, and there was not an omen in the world powerful enough to get my boys through there. We beached our canoes and prepared for a quarter-mile portage. My duffle by this point was down to practically zero. Unless my one pair of pants held out, I would come limping into Bandjermasin in a tree-bark sarong. But at least my impoverished condition simplified matters on a portage.

The trail, such as it was, followed the edge of the river, but by no means at water level. At one point we had to heave our canoes up over a cliff, and at another a cliff tried to landslide into our canoes.

It was while we were edging our canoes around a particularly sharp bend in a ledge hanging right over the water that I saw my first Punans. They were shooting the rapids in a canoe. I say rapids because none of the falls, cascades, dams and miscellaneous maelstroms were more than four or five feet high; I say canoe because whatever kind of a log it was, it had been shaped by human hands, was even slightly hollowed out, and it floated.

Down they came, tattered loincloths a-flying. They shot over a falls as if they were riding a toboggan over a ski-jump, only they were standing up. For a moment they were lost in the spray, but they came out on the other side still partly afloat. They were passing directly beneath us when they hit a rock. Everybody fell overboard, but like cats they were in the water and out again almost before they had time to get any wetter than they were. They must have been going twenty miles an hour. A whirlpool twisted them sideways, a cascade yanked them into a chute backwards, and



another rock rolled them over. When last seen they were entering a spray-filled chasm riding an upsidedown canoe backwards, and having one hell of a good time.

Two weeks later I was to meet a Chinese trader who, for a price, agreed to produce a crew of Punans to pose for my cameras. When the bedraggled, unkempt, scrawny bunch crept uneasily within range of my cameras I recognized two of them as members of the boating party. Taman Kila questioned the leader on this point, and he admitted that they had come down the river but a few days before. That was as far as we could question them. Fearful that their souls were being captured by the black boxes with the evil-appearing single eyes, they filtered into the jungle and vanished.

Prior to this incident, however, I had been having a few troubles of my own. In the *kampong* of Baboeat I arrived at almost the exact moment its rajah, Silang, died. Fortunately, the *dajoeng* had predicted his death and announced its cause several days before they knew of my coming, so in this case they could not blame me for the rajah's demise.

Silang had died, they announced gravely, because he had lost his soul. Not only had he lost it, but Bali Antoeën Hoetang had stolen it, and of all the spirits in Borneo, Bali Antoeën Hoetang is the worst. He is the spirit in charge of werewolves, vampires, devils and the evil spirits who can assume any malignant shape they desire. It is he who sneaks up on sleeping men and snatches their souls so that they wake up drowsy and pepleless, and eventually just up and die. Fevers of any kind are the work of Antoeën Hoetang. If a man comes down with fever, *dajoengs* hired by his family



go out into the jungle with baskets and implore Antoeën Hoetang to place the man's soul in the basket so that they can return it to him. They leave offerings in the brush, and return to the sick man's home with their baskets. After sealing all the holes in the room, they open the baskets and blow the soul toward the invalid. If he gets well, they brought him his soul; if he dies it was because Antoeën Hoetang willed it.

In this case, Antoeën Hoetang had definitely willed it. The *dajoengs* knew this was so because on a recent hunting trip they had smelled a decomposing body back in the brush, a positive indication that Antoeën Hoetang would be hunting a new body in which to live.

As explained to me, Bali Antoeën Hoetang must live in a mortal body during the day, but at night, by the simple expedient of ripping off his own head and disemboweling himself, he is free to roam at will as long as he gets back to his corpse before dawn. In the event he is delayed, his corpse decomposes, and he must take his disembodied head and bowels on a weird hunt for a new dwelling place. Hence, whenever a Dyak smells decomposition, he knows Antoeën Hoetang is hunting a new body.

The reason for the peculiar anatomical disintegration is that, as long as Antoeën Hoetang has his own head and stomach, he thinks and eats like himself, so it doesn't matter what kind of body he might occupy during the day. However, since it was a hunting party that had smelled his decomposing corpse, it was only natural that Antoeën Hoetang, desiring a new shell, should select the rajah as the most fitting person to house his spirit.



Accordingly that night he had dragged his head and intestines to the house of Silang, changed himself into a cockroach, crept in and stolen the sleeping soul.

Now if the Dyaks' beliefs were based on logic, Antoeën Hoetang would occupy Silang's body, but logic has no place in a Dyak's form of thinking. So Antoeën Hoetang takes the human soul out into the brush, hunts around for an appropriate body to occupy, and moves in, leaving Silang's perfectly good body to decompose. When I argued this point with a *dajoeng*, he agreed that it sounded silly, but defensively pointed out that it was *adat*. Antoeën Hoetang needs a fresh body every time he fails to return to his own before sunrise; he needs a fresh soul every time he needs a fresh body; he does not want to take both soul and body from the same individual. Why? *Adat*.

That night a fear-blanché but impassive slave was brought before the *belawang* pole and cleansed of evil spirits. Then, escorted by two warriors he was returned to the matting on which Silang lay. With no further ceremony he was throttled by a *dajoeng*. His soul went to the rajah to replace the one stolen by Antoeën Hoetang.

I could have stopped the slaying. All I would have had to do was shoot two or three others who were only doing what their beliefs told them to do, endanger my own party by antagonizing Dyaks all over that area, and accomplish no permanent good whatever. The slave would have been killed as soon as my back was turned anyway.

There are many rites connected with a Dyak funeral, and most of them are gruesome. Some tribes just wrap the body in mats, haul it into the jungle and leave it there.



Others build a small scaffold in the trees, and leave it up there, surrounded by all its earthly possessions and enough food to carry it to heaven. Others build *liangs* or ornate houses for the dead, more lavishly decorated than their own homes, and still others resort to a form of cremation in which the body is burned to the bone, and the bones stored in brass gongs in caves along the river. The main trouble is that while death may be sudden, funerals are not, and in the tropics a funeral ceremony lasting for days is not pleasant.

In the case of Rajah Silang, he was to be buried in a *liang*. To protect him from evil spirits during his long journey, he was dressed in his richest garments, covered with flowers and surrounded by all he held precious during his life. His murdered slave was placed at his feet, uncovered. Funeral beads of great significance were placed on his body, and all openings by which a spirit might get into the body were plugged with beads. Eyes, ears, nose, mouth, etc., were sealed in this manner, and then he was placed in his *loengoen*, or coffin, into which was also placed a basket of rice and a little salt wrapped in a palm leaf. His *loengoen* consisted of a tree trunk split in half, hollowed out in the center, and, after receiving its occupant, sealed together again with damar resin.

During the course of the funeral special women mourners kept up a frightful wailing that went undiminished all night, all day, all night, etc. It was frightful, the most depressing sound I had ever heard. Nor was there any way for me to avoid it by leaving town. No Dyak in his right mind would think of leaving the *kampong* when the omens are already



so unfavorable one man has just died. Not even Taman Kila, who had become something of a non-believer in the face of all my spirit-defying expeditions, would start out in the middle of a funeral.

I spent five days in the *kampong*, impatient to complete the rest of my journey, depressed by the poverty that seemed a common affliction on this side of Borneo, and rendered completely miserable by the dismal mourning of the villagers.

On the sixth day I could stand it no longer. Achmed, Wirio, Kitjil, Admo and I, using persuasion that was not above the employment of a little manpower, convinced Taman Kila that it was time to go. A gift of three axes, the sole remaining articles of trade in our whole kit and caboodle, persuaded a *dajoeng* to rent us a canoe even though he refused to provide us with an escort crew of warriors.

Tired, ragged, with only our guns between us and starvation, we started down the river in a rented piece of carved log. But I had my films, and the water was fast. The smell and the wailing swiftly dropped behind. Not too many miles ahead, I knew, was the *kampong* of Poeroektjahoe where, if I was lucky, I should find a trader willing to run me down to the coast in a motor boat. Down to Bandjermasin, where I had a bride awaiting my return.

One thing about traveling without an escort was that while it might be more dangerous, it certainly was a lot faster. No omens or *adats* to worry about. Of course we didn't know the river. Rocks that shouldn't have been there kept putting creases in the hull, but we really didn't worry



about it until we came to a gorge that looked a little too tough for us to handle. Achmed, working the bow, motioned for me to head her for the shore, but even while I was swinging her over, the shore shot by like something dropped off a train. I just had time to look to see that my film cans were safely lashed to their bamboo floats when the water started leaving the river bed and climbing straight up into the air.

We rode that one, whatever it was, and came foaming through on the other side like a bar of soap in a millrace. Achmed hollered, but at this point the air was so full of foam that whatever he was saying came out as spray. I thought wistfully of the gorge of the Tjehang. That might have been worse than this, but at least we were going up stream there instead of rocketing along with the current.

All of us heard the dull roar at the same time. An ominous, thunderous sound that could only come from a cataract. Ahead the river piled into a cliff and banked sharply to the right. Every man was working, and we shot that canoe right up to the top of the heap, heeled her over and banked around that corner as if bob-sledding around a hair-pin curve. Straight into a wall of spray that billowed high above the gorge.

So this was it. A waterfall to be skimmed at forty miles an hour. The roar of the water was enough to stagger the brain, but the boys didn't stop paddling. I think Achmed knew the falls was the end of the line, but he was bending that paddle of his as if determined to break the world's record in canoe jumping. He wanted to take off into space and fly down. The same could be said for the rest of the



Malays. Taman Kila was beyond thought. He just paddled.

I saw it first. With a wrench that nearly broke my back I threw the canoe over. There was a falls all right, about thirty feet high, but it was not our river falling. It was another stream falling into us. And we were headed right under it. In the spray it was almost indistinguishable.

A whirlpool clawed at our bow. Water boiling up from the bottom heaved us violently away. A ton of water hit me on the neck and I felt the canoe settle. A roaring noise filled my ears. Too late . . . too late . . . Just a second too late . . . But . . .

We made it.











